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No. 1227
9 January –
22 Jan. 2009
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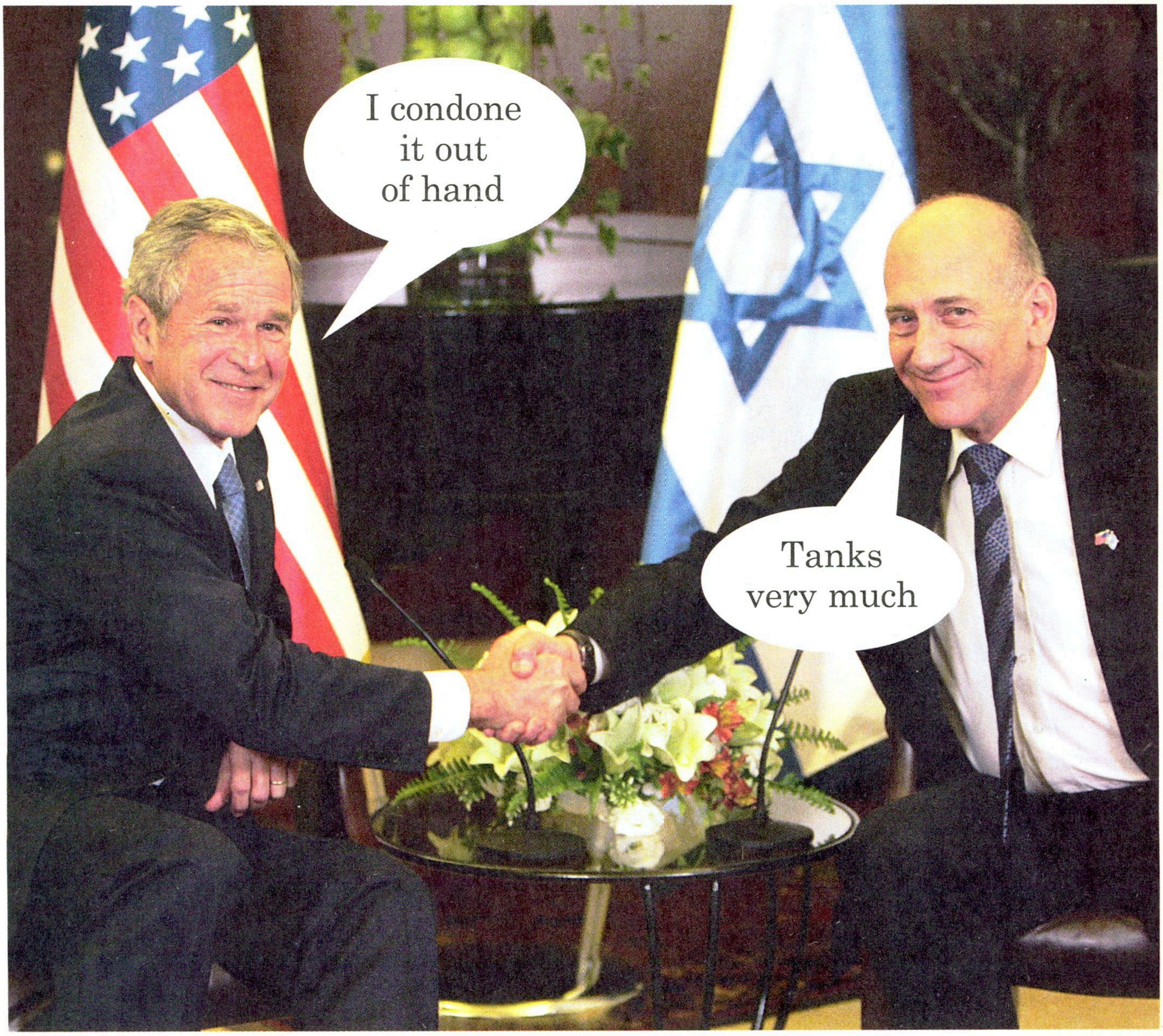
GAZA INVASION

BUSH GETS TOUGH



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Happy New War

- Screws you: Andy Coulson & the bully boys 5
- Gordon's Gongs: Those honours in full 6
- Talking Dirty! Royal photo bubble results 13
- Cleveland police farce: In the Back 26
- Bourn's beanos; IT cock-ups & more 28
- It's a Mogg's game! Anatole's Almanac 30

"At least the fare rise wasn't delayed"

WHILE foreign secretary David Miliband called for an "immediate ceasefire" in Gaza and Gordon Brown stressed the need to "stop the supply of arms" to Hamas, the Foreign Office has been licensing increasing arms sales to Israel.

These include just the kind of kit the Israeli air force needs for its bombardment of the Palestinians: components for combat aircraft and military aero engines, as well as parts for Israeli pilots' "helmet-mounted display equipment".

According to the latest Foreign Office figures, Britain exported £18,847,795-worth of weapons to Israel in the first three months of 2008. This was a sharp increase compared to the £7.5m of weapons sales to Israel in the whole of 2007.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

"We need to end libel tourism. It would be helpful if the Law Society investigated the behaviour of firms such as Schilling & Lom and Carter-Ruck, because actively touting for business is a serious problem... In these times when swindlers have been allowed to create their pyramids of debt, we need stronger journalism and judges who defend the public's right to know and not the lawyer's right to use the law to maximise his profit on behalf of causes that are not worthy of consideration by a British court."

– Rt Hon. Denis MacShane MP, opening a Commons debate on libel, 17 December 2008.

● *Libel Tourism Special, In the Back, 27*

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PO Box 326, Sittingbourne, Kent ME9 8FA.
Subscription enquiries: 01795 414 871
Overseas: +44 (0) 1795 414 870 Fax: 01795 414 555.
Web: www.subsonline.co.uk
Email: private-eye@servicehelpline.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION RATES
£28 per annum. Europe and Eire £34. Airmail (rest of world) £38.
Cheques/POs to Private Eye. Mastercard/Visa.

ADVERTISING
Ten Alps Publishing, 9 Savoy Street, London WC2E 7HR.
Email: private-eye@tenalpspublishing.com
Display: 020 7878 2366 **Classified:** 020 7240 9129

Published by Pressdram Ltd, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN. **Printed** by BGP Ltd, Bicester OX6 7QZ.
Distributed by COMAG Tavistock Road, West Drayton, Middlesex, UB7 7QE. Tel 01895 433600.

ABC

GORDON BROWN'S promise to create 100,000 new jobs renewing Britain's infrastructure, including greening energy and industry, looks rather shaky as companies building new power stations refuse to take on local workers.

RWE's sub-contractors on the Staythorpe gas-fired power station in Nottinghamshire are two Spanish firms, Montpressa and FMM. Both announced that they had no intention of employing local labour, or indeed using UK workers for the vast majority of work on the site, telling outraged construction unions they would supply workers from abroad.

And who is also in the running to receive massive government funding to build a demonstration carbon capture and storage (CCS) plant in the UK, its location yet to be decided? Why it's RWE of course! In December the German energy giant bought a 75 percent stake in Peel Energy, which is already pre-qualified for the CCS competition, in order to get a foothold in the carbon capture and storage game in the UK.

TO JUDGE by the performance of Prudential chief executive Nick Prettejohn, you can't keep a good mis-seller down.

Last month the Financial Services Authority (FSA) ruled that between 2005 and 2007, systemic failings within the Pru's Egg division (which was sold to Citibank in May 2007) led to routine mis-selling of payment protection insurance. Despite repeated warnings by the FSA to the industry, 40 percent of Egg's sales calls broke the rules, either by failing to obtain customers' consent to start policies or by ignoring their objections.

The episode is not a great advert for the light-touch approach of the FSA, which for years issued warnings rather than fines, only to see the mis-sellers carry on regardless. Egg has now been fined £721,000, with compensation to follow for those victims who have the stomach to deal with Egg again.

Just a week after the FSA exposed the rip-off over which Prettejohn had presided, he was up before parliament's treasury select committee. Did he receive a thorough roasting under the MPs' new get-tough policy? Hardly. He was there as chairman of the FSA's practitioner panel, complaining that the regulator was overdoing its "treating customers fairly" initiative!

"Phew! That's a relief – I drink a bottle!"

NUMBER CRUNCHING

11% Amount prices of unregulated tickets on CrossCountry rail routes have risen this year

35% Amount pay of David Martin, chief executive of CrossCountry parent company Arriva, rose last year (to £917,197)

WHATEVER happened to Tony Blair's Congressional Gold Medal, awarded in recognition of his "outstanding and enduring contributions to maintaining the security of all freedom-loving nations" way back in May 2003?

Nearly six years and many trips to Washington later, the former PM has yet to pick it up, prompting suggestions that he is not keen to revive memories of his exact role and relationship with George W Bush in the run-up to the invasion of Iraq.

That's not the only reason, however. The minutes of a November meeting of the US Commission of Fine Arts, which passes all honours presented by the government, reveal that "members expressed dissatisfaction with the design of the medal honouring Mr Blair and requested that it be revised and resubmitted, commenting that his likeness on the proposed obverse is awkward and does not convey his vitality."

It was suggested that "the clasped hands be deleted" and "emphasised that the direct adaptation of a photograph – the method used to generate this design – is not appropriate for developing numismatic sculpture, which has historically presented idealised images."

So whose fault is it that the gong doesn't come up to scratch? The commission pronounced itself "concerned that the development of the government's medals relies excessively on the preferences of the honoree and does not take full advantage of the mandated design and review process. As federal issue, commemorative medals produced by the Mint should exemplify the highest quality of artistry; their design is the responsibility of the government, not of the recipient."

In other words, someone let Blair do it himself – and he came up with something too tacky to be seen in public.

The commission has now sent Blair's bauble back to the drawing board at the US Mint – pointing out with icy politeness: "As always, the staff is available to assist you with future submissions."

Some of the City's biggest shitters made their way to Buckingham Palace last Tuesday. *Sunday Telegraph*

Street of Shame

ALMOST nobody at the *Maily Telegraph* is unaffected by the recent sacrificial frenzies: even the venerable Charles Moore has been told to deliver an extra sermon a week for no extra money. But there's one big, blond, blithering exception. As the few remaining hacks ask with increasing bewilderment: what about Boris?

While other pundits are having their fees halved as the price of not being sacked, the *Telegraph* continues to pay the London mayor £250,000 p.a. for a weekly column of 950 words. What makes this doubly galling for colleagues is that the terms of his contract – negotiated in 2006 by the then editor-in-chief, John Bryant – actually oblige Boris to write *two* columns a week, one for the daily and one for the Sunday paper; but he has never done so. For two years he has promised *Telegraph* bosses that he'll start honouring the contract by writing a Sunday column, but there's always been one excuse or another for procrastination – writing books, making telly series, running for office, governing London.

And, as usual, he gets away with it. Hacks who ask why are simply informed that "Boris is untouchable". So while the *Telegraph*'s own former editor has to write two columns for the price of one, BoJo writes one for the price of two. Cripes!

***TORYGRAPH* "style guru" Simon Heffer's blood pressure is going through the roof as the once highly literate newspaper's standards head in the opposite direction. The mounting tally of errors as experienced staff are axed by editor Will "Thirsty" Lewis has driven the flame-haired associate editor to write a despairing memo to hacks.**

"The headline last Sunday that said why 'board games can't be beat' was not even semi-literate", thunders Heffalump, adding: "A spendthrift is not parsimonious; he is profligate. If you don't know what a word means it is generally a good idea not to use it until you have found out...

"We also claimed that William Blake's most famous poems are 'Jerusalem' and 'Daffodils'. The poem now vulgarly named 'Daffodils' was called 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' when Wordsworth wrote it, and his view ought to be taken seriously." Geography is also suffering. "Several readers in Lowestoft were outraged to be told they lived in Norfolk," Heffer writes. "We are getting increasingly bad at allocating towns and villages to their correct counties." Oh, and "St Andrews is not part of the Russell Group of universities." And "the word 'scam' is unutterably tabloid and, like most slang, should be avoided in a quality newspaper."

CHRISTMAS, a time for family. And where better for the kiddies to enjoy it than in what the Press Complaints Commission code of practice calls "public or private property where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy"?

That way, editors can indulge in the festive pastime of "not using the fame, notoriety or position of a parent or guardian as sole justification for publishing details of a child's private life".

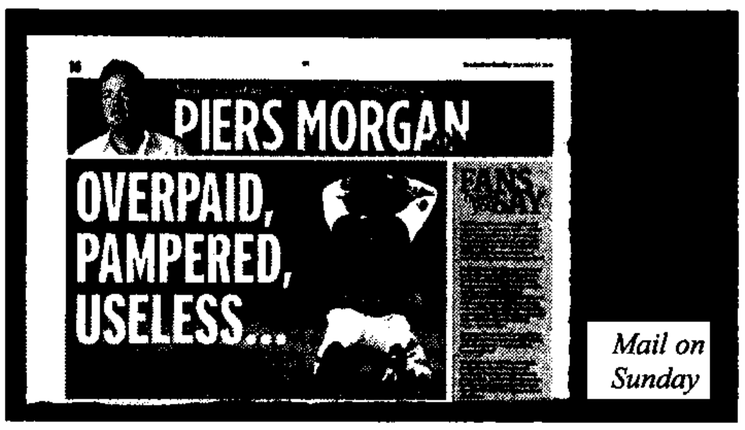
During this winter's pre-New Year lull we learned that Romeo (six) and Cruz Beckham (three) wore "super-smart" clothes to go to a restaurant with their parents David and Victoria (*Sun, Mirror*). Suri Cruise (two) also wears nice clothes (*Sun*). Dionne Broomfield (12) enjoyed a Christmas party with godmother Amy Winehouse (*Sun*). Kingston Rossdale (two) likes to go roller-skating with parents Gwen Stefani and Gavin Rossdale (*Sun*). And two-month-old Winston Fox's mother Billie Piper appears to be quite fond of him, judging by her behaviour at a resort in Florida (*Mirror, Mail, Express, Sun*).

THE *Wall Street Journal* ushers in the new year with a scathing editorial about nepotism and dynastic succession.

"A Kennedy and a Cuomo are competing to succeed a Clinton in New York; the skids are greased for a Biden to replace a Biden in Delaware; one Salazar might replace another in Colorado; and a Governor charged with political corruption in Illinois wants one of his cronies to succeed the President-elect. Let's just say we're looking forward to 2009."

And, perhaps, to a long spell on the dole: for the paper's leader-writers seem to have forgotten who now owns them. Rupert Murdoch, son of newspaper tycoon Sir Keith Murdoch, has appointed three of his sprogs (Lachlan, Elisabeth and James), plus the husband of daughter Prue, to senior positions in the News Corporation empire over the years.

The Digger has also made clear he wants his family to inherit the company, and ensured that when he stood down as chairman of BSkyB and News International in December 2007 it was young James who took over both jobs. Talk about greasing the skids!



"THE cleavage factor... struggling valiantly to contain her curves... thigh-high leather... Burke's skirt begins to ride up... she is just 17... indulging in a show of kissing each other, with outstretched tongues."

On which publication's website does this panting account of a girls' night out featuring several *X Factor* contestants, accompanied by what can only be described as an "upskirt shot" of winner Alexandra Burke, appear? The *Daily Star*? *Sunday Sport*? *Razzle*?

Er, no: it's that self-appointed guardian of public morals the *Daily Mail*, which coyly captioned Burke's accidental exposure of her knickers when getting out of a taxi as "a wardrobe mishap".

FAY MASCHLER, the Evening Standard's restaurant critic, is the doyenne of her trade, renowned for her independence and objectivity. But she is also the co-owner of a restaurant consultancy business, A Private View, which she founded last year with the *Standard*'s former features editor, Simon "Brilliantine" Davis. The firm's website boasts the legend: "Get the critics before they get you."

Shome conflict of interest, shurely? One of A Private View's first clients is the St Pancras Grand, a new eaterie run by Searcys at St Pancras station. And what do we find in Fay's end-of-year guide to the "best restaurants of 2008", published in the *Standard* two weeks ago? "Until the opening of St Pancras Grand there have been in recent times no great railway restaurants. Designer Martin Brudnizki produced a timeless classic interior to show off proudly our indigenous cooking to French people pouring off Eurostar." Nowhere does she mention that Searcys paid her a large fee for advice on the very restaurant she is now plugging for a further fee from the *Standard*.

Still, at least she's honest about one thing. When an interviewer from *PR Week* asked why she'd started up the consultancy with Davis, Fay replied: "I wanted to make more money."

EVERY year, as befits the nation's most venerable leftie journal, the *New Statesman* marks TUC conference week with a 32-page supplement celebrating trade unionism. But it seems rather keener on the theory than the practice.

Since last May, as we reported in *Eye* 1219, hacks at the *Staggers* have been requesting official recognition for their chapel (office-branch) of the National Union of Journalists, to which a large majority of them belong.

Creepy *NS* publisher Spencer Neal has now written to the hacks on behalf of the mag's millionaire co-owners, Geoffrey "Paymaster" Robinson and Mike "Ted" Danson, formally confirming that, er, they refuse to recognise trade unions.

WHEN seasoned snapper Paul Stewart worked his well-padded backside off for Richard "Dirty" Desmond during the industrial dispute at Express Newspapers back in April he was rewarded with pots of dosh and a slap-up feed. He assumed he was in Dirty Des's good books for all eternity. Not so.

"Who are you? You fat cunt," inquired the proprietor upon seeing Stewart doing a shift on the picture desk of the *Daily Express*. The lardy lensman was so startled by this unseasonal greeting he couldn't answer. "Who the fuck is that fat fuckin' cunt over there?" Desmond then demanded of editor Peter Hill, who explained that Stewart was in fact a casual. "Well fuckin' sack the fat cunt," retorted the chairman. Paul Stewart donned his XXL coat and walked out.

"OPENING his heart to the *Sun*, Gazza branded Channel 4 bosses a 'disgrace' for allowing his 12-year-old son Regan to attack him in a show to be broadcast on Monday," shrieked Friday's *Sun* in a front-page "exclusive".

It may be a new year, but some old traditions still stand; and as usual the *News of the World* rushed to rubbish its sister paper's scoop. "Paul is very aware Regan WANTED to do the filming and they were even filmed TOGETHER," revealed new showbiz columnist Dan Wootton in another front-page "exclusive" which he gained through the age-old journalistic technique of... being sent a preview copy of the documentary in question and watching it in the office.

***SUN* readers may have been puzzled by Julie Burchill's column on 30 December, which had a distinct flavour of reheated leftovers.**

Why was she filling it with guff about the Ross-Brand scandal, a two-month-old story? *Sun* hacks are happy to explain.

The piece was virtually word-for-word the same as a dummy TV column Burchill wrote (and was handsomely paid for) two months previously, with the odd reference to the new year thrown in to liven it up. And now she has been handsomely paid for it again. Attagirl!

WHO HE?

"*History Boys* star Russell Tovey is tipped to replace David Tennant as the new Doctor Who." – *Daily Mirror*, 17 September.

"Could Richard Hammond be the next Doctor Who?" – *Sunday Express*, 21 September.

"Comic Noel Fielding is in talks with the BBC to become the new Doctor Who." – *News of the World*, 30 November.

"*Doctor Who* fans will today discover the identity of the latest actor to play the Time Lord. Paterson Joseph is the runaway favourite." – *Daily Mail*, 3 January.

"It could be Doctor HUGH as forums buzz with rumours that Hugh Grant, 48, may land the role." – *Sun*, 3 January.

"The identity of the next Doctor Who actor will finally be confirmed today – and it could be a woman." – *Independent*, 3 January.

SACKWATCH

The Turn Of The Screws

IN 2003, under the editorship of Andy Coulson, the *News of the Screws* launched its Helping Hand campaign to combat bullying in the playground. "We are determined to stamp out this evil that blights our youngsters' lives," it declared.

This has become a recurring theme. An editorial in November 2006 ("Let's Beat All Bullies") rejoiced at the news that 75 percent of secondary schools had signed up to the paper's Anti-Bullying Charter. Another editorial three months later vowed that "the *News of the World* will not hesitate to name and shame those that fail to shield pupils from this evil". Columnist Ulrika Jonsson added that "horrendous as child bullying is, in some ways it's almost worse among adults if only because we should know better".

While the paper thundered against bullying at school, however, it was turning a blind eye in the workplace. In the week before Christmas, an employment tribunal upheld a claim for unfair dismissal from sports hack Matt Driscoll, who was sacked in April 2007 while absent from the office with stress-related depression. The tribunal found that the *Screws* subjected Driscoll to "a consistent pattern of bullying behaviour… with the intention to remove him from their employment", and that Coulson himself was "the original source of the hostility".

It all started late in 2004 when the editor gave Driscoll a tip that Arsenal FC was planning to play in purple shirts. Driscoll rang the club's press officer, who denied it, and so he didn't write the story. But the *Sun* ran it three months later. "Coulson will be on the warpath over this," sports editor Mike Dunn told Driscoll. "We are dead." Sure enough, the editor began persecuting Driscoll – and, to save his own skin, Dunn joined in. Driscoll was "disciplined" for stories that provoked complaints from football managers, even though the stories turned out to be true. These disciplinary actions, according to the tribunal, "were a pretext for a desire to get rid of him as an employee".

The dishevelled Dunn, now head of sport at the *Sun*, cut a moronic figure in the witness box, using words such as "fuck" and "bastard" during his evidence. When cross-examined about a protest from Arsenal FC concerning a Driscoll exclusive, Dunn exclaimed that he was "completely appalled when Matty handed me a couple of pages of scribbles" to back up his quotes from an Arsenal player in the disputed piece. After almost a minute of stunned silence, Driscoll's barrister, Matthew Sheridan, said: "I think you will find that is what is called shorthand."

The tribunal also heard Dunn claim that "I don't think Matt has ever had any kind of a personal relationship with Paul Ince", as further evidence of his uselessness as a sports hack. It is widely known in Fleet Street that Driscoll not only went to Ince's 30th birthday party but was also pictured holding the FA Cup with the former England captain at his wedding. And, as Dunn would surely have known, it was because of Driscoll's relationship with Ince and Sir Alex Ferguson that the *Screws* was able to use both as star columnists for six years.

Andy Coulson left the *Screws* in January 2007, after royal correspondent Clive Goodman was found to have illegally hacked into Prince William's mobile phone, only to be appointed as David Cameron's chief spin doctor four months later. But the campaign against Driscoll was continued by Coulson's lackeys. In March 2007, when the *Screws* ran yet another editorial about the "scourge" of bullying, they were bombarding Driscoll with emails and phone calls while he was off sick on his GP's instructions. A month later they axed him.

All the *Screws* executives who appeared in the witness box are now branded as knaves or fools by the tribunal's judgment. Managing editor Stuart Kuttner gets off quite lightly: "His responses were evasive." No such euphemisms for his deputy, Paul Nicholas, who is flatly accused of perjuring himself when answering questions about the Max Mosley affair, and particularly about the seedy *Screws* hack who supervised the story, Neville Thurlbeck.

As the tribunal points out, Thurlbeck "was found to have blackmailed one of the prostitutes involved in the case to give an interview; he took no written notes to confirm his quotations; and included an allegation that was plainly false and he must have known to be false" – rather more serious offences than Driscoll's alleged mistakes. Had Thurlbeck been disciplined? The deputy managing editor professed ignorance. "Mr Nicholas's response was more than disingenuous," the tribunal found. "He was, to put it plainly, lying to us."

At least Nicholas and Dunn showed up to give evidence, which is more than can be said for Andy Coulson. This completes a hat-trick since he did not give evidence in the trial of Clive Goodman, and neatly avoided having to testify at the Press Complaints Commission by resigning on the eve of its inquiry into the affair, thus becoming "no longer answerable to the PCC".

The tribunal's verdict that the *Screws* is run by liars and bullies has prompted an urgent inquest at Wapping, though it remains to be seen if anyone will be offered up as a sacrifice. What of the Conservative Party, which now employs the bully-in-chief as its director of communications?

Tory spinners have been in overdrive since Christmas, warning hacks not to run anything on the damning judgment for fear of antagonising "the chap who'll run the next government". Interviewed by the *Sunday Times* last week, George Osborne boasted that his party is looking forward to a general election: "This is not the David and George show. There is a strong team in Central Office." Such as? The first name he cited was that of Andy Coulson.

Recessionballs

"Interior designer Kelly Hoppen is offering 'credit crunch seminars' to give a few pointers about how to get through the festivities on a budget. For just £460, with VAT and lunch included, Kelly will help her clients with lighting, flower-arranging and general accessorising with the emphasis on value for money."

– Telegraph, 22 December

"Exclusive to Selfridges the 'Credit Crunch' has been created through collaboration between restaurateur and food writer Laura Santini and The Chocolate Society. 'Credit Crunch' is a more-ish marriage of the very best velvet-rich Valrhona chocolate, thickly coated over hokey pokey honeycomb pieces. It is available covered either in dark or milk Valrhona chocolate (£3.99 for a 150g bag)."

– Selfridges press release

"RECESSION FASHION: Celia Walden brings us a selection of longer hemlines and accessories to suit the current financial situation. Leather clutch, £245, Nogoy at Browns… Silk kimono dress, £249."

– Telegraph website

Heat Resistant

HOW OK! CORRALS READERS

UNTIL recently it was thought that the most misleading claim printed on the front of any publications owned by pornographer Richard Desmond was the *Daily Express*'s daily boast that it is "The World's Greatest Newspaper". During 2008, however, the cover-lines on his *OK!* magazine managed to stray so far from the truth that even the Press Complaints Commission noticed.

When a customer complained that a copy of the magazine she had spent £2.95 on as a result of the cover-line "Star-Studded Wedding of Wayne and Coleen" contained nothing on the topic but an advert for the following issue, the PCC leapt into action – ruling, with its customary rigour, that the matter required no further action after Desmond's company offered to buy off the complainant with a free six-month subscription.

Bolstered by this victory, the cover-lies (*surely "lines"? Ed*) on the magazine have gone from strength to strength in recent months...

21 October 2008: "Jordan – Why I Walked Out on Pete. It Looks Like I'll be a Single Mum." Have the golden couple split? "We are not breaking up," they reveal inside, outlining plans to renew their wedding vows. The cover also offers a "WORLD EXCLUSIVE: Dying Wendy Richard's Tearful Wedding Day". Inside, the poorly *EastEnders* star admits she "was deeply hurt when the press sensationalised her plight by suggesting that she was dying".

11 November: "Kym Marsh & *Hollyoaks*' Jamie Lomas: 'Our Wedding Plans' Exclusive." What do these consist of? "We've talked about things like that," the stars reveal. "We'd maybe go abroad or something."

25 November: "Shock Wedding Exclusive: Nikki Grahame Marries Andy Scott-Lee." Grahame, a contestant in the seventh series of *Big Brother,* has not married boy-bander Scott-Lee. Both are single. *OK!*'s feature is simply an illustration of "exactly how" Grahame plans to do things "when I get married for real".

2 December: Finally, the truth: "Jordan's Most Controversial and Unbelievable Interview Ever". And you would indeed be stupid to believe the cover claim from a tearful Jordan that "I Found Pete in Bed with Another Woman", given that it refers only to the fact the pair have posed inside with a blow-up doll. Having shelled out their £2.95, readers can also enjoy "*I'm a Celebrity's* Nicola McLean: My Steamy Nights with Justin Timberlake", in which the model reveals she once met the singer "several years ago" and "didn't respond to his advances".

16 December: "Kerry – Why Mark Walked Out and Left Me" – he didn't, and he hasn't. "Jordan Holiday Pregnancy Shock" – she "may, in fact, be pregnant" if one believes "rumours".

30 December: A "Special Double Issue" has – yes, you've guessed it – 16 *fewer* pages than the previous week. Its cover brings news of "Jordan & Peter at Home in their Medieval Castle" (it's Tudor, and not theirs), "David Van Day: Scrooge Home Alone at Christmas" (he will be in "Barbados with my daughters") and "Victoria Credit Crunch Shopping" in Lidl (an unconvincing lookalike demonstrating "what would become of David and Victoria Beckham if they were struggling to make ends meet").

6 January 2009: "'Being Pregnant Won't Split the Band': Cheryl – Baby Boy Predicted! Exclusive". Exclusive, that is, in the sense that Cheryl Cole is not pregnant, and the only person predicting she "may fall pregnant" in the coming year is, er, "renowned psychic Gavin Cromwell".

Another prediction for the new year: *OK!* will carry on pulling tricks like this until a repeat of its successful prosecution in 2001 by Warwickshire Trading Standards for falsely claiming to have photographs of Madonna's "Beautiful Dress" and "Romantic Ceremony" after her wedding, when the magazine was fined £3,500 – considerably less than the millionaire Desmond makes from fleecing gullible readers every week.

NEW YEAR HONOURS

NO surprise that bankers were largely absent from the new year honours list. Gongs for those behind the financial crisis would just have looked too bad. But there was still plenty of room to reward dubious services and failure elsewhere...

GORDON'S GOOD BOOKS

Christopher Greenwood QC was knighted for "services to public international law", his "service" being to give the government a legal opinion that the Iraq war was within the law, when no other serious lawyer seemed keen to help the administration. Since he gave them the paper in 2002 arguing that old UN resolutions meant war was OK, Greenwood has been richly rewarded with government work, British backing for a job at the International Court of Justice and now a knighthood.

Gordon Brown also recommended a knighthood for the outgoing Lord Mayor of London **David Lewis**, a City representative with a seat on the prime minister's "Financial Services Global Competitiveness Group". He used this access to lobby for tax cuts for the rich. In February 2008 Lewis told the *Sunday Times*: "I meet City businessmen of all sorts. I have up to eight meetings a day and, at the moment, five or six of these people mention the credit crunch – but non-dom tax changes come up at every single one."

For services to not rocking too many boats, former chairman of the Electoral Commission **Sam Younger** becomes a Commander of the British Empire. Two years ago his commission was condemned by the commissioner for standards in public life for its "lack of courage, competence and leadership" in the wake of the loans-for-peerages episode and a failure to act on widespread electoral fraud.

SUBSIDISED CBEs

Businessmen already reliant on big government subsidies were rewarded for relying on taxpayers' cash. **Robert Holden**, CEO of London & Continental Railways, got a CBE. His firm, running the Channel tunnel rail link, gets billions in government subsidies and guarantees to keep it in business. His firm looks set to win even more subsidies, too, as it owns the land underneath the proposed "Olympic Village" development.

Terry Morgan of Tube Lines also got a CBE. His company runs one half of the privatised London Underground, also depending completely on public subsidy. The government is keen on Morgan because his section of the privatised Tube did not completely collapse, unlike the other firm, Metronet. Morgan's firm has not always impressed, however: London Underground arbiter Chris Bolt found Tube Lines had asked for £1bn too much because it overestimated costs and acted inefficiently.

There was also a CBE for **Mike Parker**, the outgoing chief exec of state-owned failure BNFL. At a time when the British government is committed to nuclear energy, this loss-making atomic firm is about to be closed down. Parker has already grabbed £525,100 compensation for "loss of office" alongside his £1.4m salary.

NO TAX? NO PROBLEM

Honours for tax dodgers weren't limited to the MBE for Swiss resident **Lewis Hamilton**. It was arise **Sir John Madejski**, chairman of Reading FC, for putting some of his fortune to charitable use. Whether this is as much as the scores of millions he saved by fleeing to Malaysia for a couple of years to avoid capital gains tax on the sale of his *Autotrader* empire is not known.

There was also a K for the chief executive of City law firm DLA Piper, **Nigel Knowles**, who presides over a firm providing "solutions to reduce tax costs", ie tax avoidance. Despite the absence of bankers from the list, DLA's proclaimed expertise in "structured finance and banking", including the off-balance-sheet securitisations that caused the financial crisis, were no bar to Knowles's gong.

The regulators who give a veneer of respectability to the world's tax havens were also represented on the overseas list, with an OBE for the former boss of the Bermudan monetary authority, **Cheryl-Ann Lister**, for services to "sound financial regulation".

SWEET REWARDS

Unable to award bankers, the government turned instead to two of its other favourite industries. First there was a CBE for advertising boss **Cilla Snowball**, boss of advertising firm Abbott Mead Vickers, where she oversees the valuable Pepsico/Walkers accounts. Pushing sugary drinks and fatty snacks to children is, it seems, an honourable profession. MPs investigating advertising found, to Cilla's embarrassment, that Abbott Mead Vickers' strategy for selling Wotsits included a focus on children reading "Wotsits are for me. I'm going to buy them when I get the chance and pester mum for them when she is shopping." Perhaps Cilla won her CBE through pester power.

Then, in the honourable occupation of arms manufacturing, **Douglas Caster**, boss of weapons firm Ultra Electronics, gets a CBE and **Grahame Nix** of military aeroplane maker Marshall Aerospace an OBE.

LOCAL ZEROES

David Prince, chairman of local government ethics watchdog, the Standards Board for England, from January 2004 until June 2008, got a CBE for "services to local government". Prince's great service, in fact, was to *central* government, in marginalising the misconceived Blair-era SBE – a huge source of embarrassment for its inconsistent decisions and political point-scoring – by throwing most of its cases back to local councils to decide.

And an OBE went to **Nick Stanton**, leader of the London borough of Southwark, who in recent years has ridden out a Commission for Racial Equality investigation into racism at the council and a major planning scandal. Last year Stanton's Lib Dem/Tory alliance came under fire for closing a popular children's museum and hiking the price of meals on wheels. The following month, with a nice sense of timing, Stanton hosted a £6,000 champagne reception to "foster good partnerships" with Southwark's waste contractor, Veolia – with council taxpayers picking up the bill. Trebles all round!

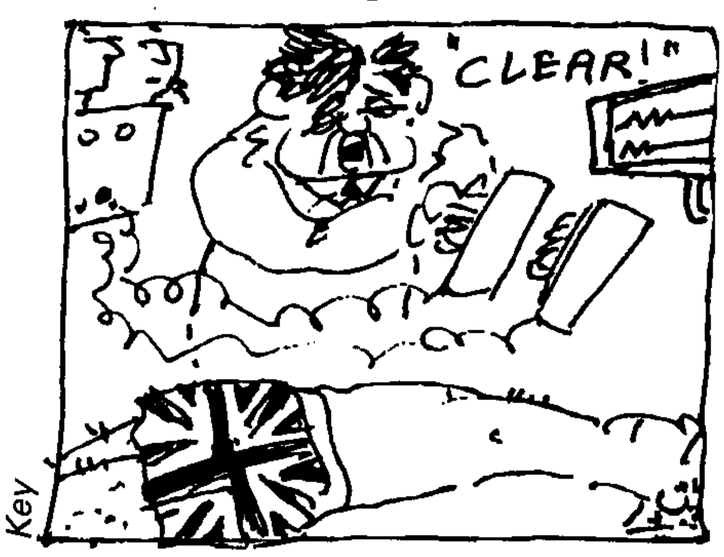
JUST FANCY THAT!

21 December 2003 – *Observer* financial journalist William Keegan writes the following spoof conversation between his fictional character Sir Douglas Corridor and the Prime Minister...

Sir DC: *Anyway, Prime Minister, isn't it time to put a stop to the Honours system? After that recent leak of the minutes there can't be anyone in the land who takes it seriously.*

PM: *Oh, Douglas, I take it terribly seriously. I don't need to tell you, patronage has always solved a lot of problems and always will.*

31 December 2008 – CBE announced for... **William Keegan.**



FRINGE BENEFITS

CRITICS wonder if it's a good idea to try to chase single mums and the disabled off benefits and into work just as unemployment rises. But work and pensions minister James Purnell's welfare reforms *can* create jobs – for former officials and ministers anyway.

Purnell promises that private companies will chase the slackers back into work; and these companies are already offering jobs to influential insiders.

In September the former Cabinet Office secretary Sir Richard Mottram joined the advisory board of Employment Service Holdings. In its native Australia, this company already has many government employment services contracts and is desperate to cash in on the new British market created by Purnell's programme. Sir Richard's long career as a mandarin with knowledge of and access to the highest levels of government make him a valuable employee.

The reforms may also have increased the employability of David Blunkett, who used to have Purnell's cabinet job and recently became a £30,000 a year "adviser" to A4E (Action for Employment). A4E already holds many New Deal contracts to help the unemployed off the dole and can surely expect to win some of Purnell's new contracts.

Blunkett, who still wields influence and may even be brought back into cabinet as one of Gordon Brown's "retread" ministers, also happens to be writing Labour's "Charity Mini-Manifesto", outlining proposals to mobilise the "third sector" for Purnell's welfare programmes.

Blunkett's recent paper for the Fabian Society on "empowering the third sector" previews this charity manifesto and shows how charities could be used as a cover to drum up more business for outfits like A4E. He writes enthusiastically about how charities can deliver local, bottom-up welfare services; but he also produces a chapter on "social enterprises", which are "sustainable for-profit businesses", including "national and even international, multi-million-pound enterprises" – such as A4E, a £75m company that has branched out from Britain to run unemployment services in Poland and Israel.

In a document supposedly about charities, Blunkett repeatedly makes statements such as "by combining a public service ethos with a commercial focus on efficiency and good business practice, social enterprises are able to deliver on the things that really matter whilst remaining both independent and sustainable".

"Social enterprises" can also make their bosses rich – A4E chairman Emma Harrison is worth millions – and still have enough left over to employ former ministers like David Blunkett, of course.

"Great news! We're not a hard-working family any more!"

FOI'D AGAIN

RED FACES at the Cabinet Office (motto "making government work better"), which has been served with a formal notice by the Information Commissioner after refusing for eight months to supply him with information to resolve a freedom of information request from *Private Eye*.

This is just the latest of many examples of the Cabinet Office refusing to cooperate with the laws introduced four years ago. When the *Eye* last year asked government departments for details of hospitality received by top Whitehall mandarins, the Cabinet Office orchestrated a cover-up which led to identical refusals on cost grounds from every department, even though some have since admitted that, on reflection, the refusals were false.

The Cabinet Office has now spent a year (12 times the time allowed) refusing to review its refusal to divulge details of what it told the other departments. The Information Commissioner is investigating this, too. And naturally requests for details of the schmoozing of its own top brass meet with the same dumb insolence (again a year with no response).

These failures are pretty bad even by the standards of a department that grants the smallest proportion of requests in Whitehall – 25 percent on latest figures. The stonewalling could be related to a recent *Eye* discovery that the mandarin in charge at the Cabinet Office, Sir Gus O'Donnell, is himself not averse to a spot of face-feeding at taxpayers' expense.

The same Sir Gus told parliament soon after the police raid on shadow immigration spokesman Damian Green that leaks were "corrosive" – unlike covering up and obsessive secrecy, of course – and that he had approved the raid on the MP's office. Though happy to send Knacker in when he thinks others are breaking information laws, it seems Sir Humphrey isn't too keen on complying with them himself.

● *John Bourn's Junkets: In the Back, p28*

LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELDS

THE government's Change4Life campaign to harass everyone to take exercise for the sake of their health begins this month. So why does the NHS still want to concrete over school playing fields?

The new health centre in West Mersea, Essex, is to be built by Realise Health, a private joint venture between NHS North East Essex and fund management company Mill Group, set up to operate the Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) PPP scheme to replace local GP practices. As reported in *Eye 1224*, LIFT is unpopular, with only one in five of targeted trusts adopting the scheme and GPs complaining that even with a hefty government subsidy, leasing the new surgeries can work out more expensive than their old premises.

But for West Mersea, LIFT will also cost the local community the Legion Field, a currently unused school playing field which the trust says "was found to be the only viable option" for the new medical centre. Local campaigners claim brownfield sites are available. The two-storey surgery, plus car park, would take up more than half the field, making the rest of the site less useful as a playing field and even more vulnerable to development.

Writing in Mersea Island's newsletter, West Mersea town councillor Alan Mogridge says the council has written several times asking Mersea Island School to make the fields accessible for casual public use. "It is they who have declared it redundant and have not used it for some years," he says. "It is they who have locked the gates."

But it's not yet a done deal. After the trust circulated a leaflet in December, announcing that the centre would be built on the Legion Field subject to planning permission, the school's governors contacted the local press to say they hadn't actually agreed to sell the field yet.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

YET more phoney guarantees by Brussels to the Irish have been exposed – this time by The National Platform EU Research and Information Centre.

In their desperation to get the Irish to vote again for the same constitutional treaty they rejected (now renamed Lisbon), EU leaders have deluded the Irish into believing the new treaty would guarantee them an EU commissioner in Brussels (*Eye* 1226) who, they claimed, would have been taken away under the old Nice treaty.

But the EU Research Centre's director, Anthony Coughlan, reveals that it is actually the new Lisbon treaty that plans to take away the commissioners from member states. Says Coughlan: "It is the Lisbon Treaty which proposes a reduction of one third from 2014. What Nice provides for is a reduction in the size of the Commission by an unspecified number from 2009… to be agreed unanimously." However, he explained that since such unanimity was unlikely, the current situation would remain if Lisbon were not ratified and all member states would keep their commissioners.

The centre also exposed false claims that the Irish could choose their commissioner under the Lisbon treaty, when in fact the decision would be made by the commission's president, with the help of larger member states. "What is the value of every EU state continuing to have one of its nationals on the EU Commission under Lisbon... if member state governments can no longer decide who that person will be?" asks Coughlan.

Have our leaders forgotten how to read, or are they simply lying?

EU-phemisms

Hopefully it'll be such a disaster the Brits will finally have to join the euro

WORLD OF HYPE

CARPHONE Warehouse co-founder and Tory donor David Ross quit the board of the mobile phone firm and a string of other directorships last month after confessing he had used his shareholdings in the companies as collateral for personal loans without informing the stock market. Despite this being an open-and-shut case of breaking City regulations, Ross has begun a campaign to persuade hacks that it was all a fuss about nothing.

Who is his little helper in this PR exercise? Step forward Mark Bolland, former spinner for Prince Charles and Camilla, who is not known for his City contacts but does have a hotline to national newspaper editors.

The Bolland spin is that Ross didn't do anything illegal ("words like scandal just aren't appropriate") but now intends to redeem himself anyway by "concentrating on his private business interests and philanthropy". Cue a series of gushing pieces in the business pages, saying what a good chap Ross is and how he has "drawn comfort from more than 500 text messages from friends and colleagues".

None of which alters the fact that Ross repeatedly flouted the rules. But why upset this much-loved philanthropist by mentioning that?

THE American-owned ITT Corporation has produced a gushing tender document in its hunt for a PR agency to puff its ethical credentials.

The company wants help spreading the word about initiatives that boost its reputation for corporate responsibility. This includes "supporting the company's signature philanthropy initiative, ITT Watermark, as well as communications activities in support of core corporate functions like Environmental, Safety, & Health (ESH) and Inclusion & Diversity."

ITT's homepage and annual reports meanwhile offer heart-warming images of hunger relief initiatives, and describe the firm as a "diversified high-technology engineering and manufacturing company dedicated to creating more liveable environments, enabling communications and providing protection and safety." Its most prominent service is depicted as "water management"; and the green agenda is clearly extremely important.

Less prominent in the blurb is the fact the ITT's largest client is the US military; and that its products include missile parts and night vision goggles, which it has sold to armed forces fighting the "War on Terror" in Afghanistan and Iraq (including £15m worth to our own Ministry of Defence).

And it is also coy about the fact that in 2007 ITT became the first major defence contractor to be convicted for criminal violation of the US arms export control act, for which it was fined $100m.

Does ITT's need for a communications agency to promote the social responsibility of its war-waging products have anything to do with the looming change of US government? It will be interesting to see which PR firm snaps up the $500,000 contract.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

£2.4bn Estimated government cost to taxpayer every year of school-leavers not being able to do maths

£37bn Actual cost to taxpayer last year of government-regulated bankers not being able to do maths

ETV

Celebrity Big Brother (C4)
Above Suspicion (ITV1)

ONE of the more dubious effects of television has been to change the human sense of time. Our internal calendar – first shaped by the changing seasons and then by ancient man-made dates such as the start of the cricket season and the advent of the school year – is now defined by telly scheduling. June means *Big Brother*, September *The X Factor* and *Strictly Come Dancing* and, if it's January, it must be a gruesome new Lynda La Plante drama leading off the ITV drama season and, inevitably, *Celebrity Big Brother*.

As the Christmas lights come down and the Mini Creme Eggs appear on supermarket counters, up as well comes that Geordie drawl, now sounding as comically self-parodic as a late Tom Jones album: "12.18pm and some of the housemates are on the sofa." Now, how much could we have done without that grim seasonal refrain?

At least, this year, there's a slight element of surprise in the nights of the frozen ground because *Celebrity Big Brother* was absent last year as punishment for the racist baiting of Shilpa Shetty, so there's a mild fascination in seeing the new, cleaned-up, Ofcom-pleasing version of a format heading for its decade on the screens and a well-earned pension.

Well, what we get is more of the same and, very possibly before long, more of the shame. Within 24 hours, rapper Coolio had already used the n-word, although there's at least a theoretical advance in the taboo usage being by, rather than about, a non-white competitor and complicated by the spelling and intent that the word has in hip-hop music.

There's also early unease over this year's main innovation in the casting. The severely growth-restricted actor Verne Troyer is the most disabled performer to be admitted to the home for limelight-denied performers. This could be seen as a progressive move – and Troyer played along with this idea in the early stages – but there's an uneasy sense that *CBB*, not for the first time, is trying to have it both ways. The camera angles often seem calculated to achieve comic effect from his tininess, a sort of documentary version of his shtick in *Austin Powers*, and

a nagging feeling that he's present as a test of the tolerance and liberal credentials of the other housemates… and that, if they fail it, C4 will milk the publicity while smugly telling the regulator that it was investigating attitudes to disability.

So far, the limited pleasure has come from the hope that La Toya Jackson actually isn't La Toya but is, in fact, her brother Michael in drag, so strong is their physical resemblance – and the awesome self-absorption of Ulrika Jonsson, who, even by previous scientific measurements of the extent to which minor celebrities can be up themselves, sets new standards. She tried to empathise with Troyer over his lifelong physical difficulties by revealing: "I've had terrible back pain for 18 months." Soon, she was trilling on in the diary room about the *CBB* house being "a piece of the world inside the real world".

Otherwise, it's the usual grim spectacle of career car-crashes bumping each other to get back on track. "11.38pm and Michelle, Verne and Terry are talking about the bathroom facilities!" While they're at it, couldn't they just flush this whole show down the crapper?

Lynda La Plante's **Above Suspicion** was a predictable gift to ITV1.

Within minutes, there was the autopsy porn – a long-undiscovered body teeming with maggots and blow-flies – and further evidence of the surprising streak of misogyny in TV's most prominent woman writer, as, in a repeated flashback, the legs of a rape-murder victim are roughly pulled apart by her killer.

ITV is desperate for LLP to find a new franchise to match the now-pensioned *Prime Suspect*, and you can't fault the writer for trying to give them more of the same. In this one, Ciaran Hinds plays the brutish, sexist DCI that Tom Bell pioneered in *PS*, while Kelly Reilly, as a patronised but ultimately triumphant detective constable, bids for some of Dame Mirren's stardust as a character who could easily be the daughter of Jane Tennison. And, as usual, the solution involves sexual abuse in childhood.

The one innovation here is that the murder suspect is a top British television actor who is about to make it in Hollywood. This allows Jason Durr to enjoy that most cherished of luvvie challenges: acting an actor and showing him both acting and non-acting with a few bits where we're not supposed to be sure. So the plot is presumably revenge on some of the tossers LLP has been forced to audition and employ. But, if she is doing self-reference, she might try one next time about a top female author's strange relish for depicting women raped and rotting.

'Remote Controller'

Elizabethan Advertising

"White lead, vinegar and mercury. Because I'm worth it."

AD NAUSEAM

LOOK out for a star-studded BBC "Children's Festival" coming in March. It should be a carousel of family fun, but an email from a BBC staffer sent to PRs and seen by the *Eye* suggests that, as ever, children and stealth marketing are never far apart.

According to the email: "This is a great opportunity to strut and promote all things aimed at children and families. We are looking for a spectacular venue in London that can hold 500-600 people which companies would like to promote and offer free of charge. We are looking for companies who would like to offer free goody bags for 600 adult guests packed with treats which they would like to promote, ie cosmetics, gadgets, perfume, kids' stuff etc."

The panhandling continued – the Beeb also wants "generous quantities" of free booze, as well as "companies who work in games, merchandise, food and drink, books and gadgets who can set up a stalls [*sic*] and promote their products and give out free samples".

Ignoring whether the BBC should be soliciting PR freebies at all (there was no mention in the email of any charitable intent), it surely shouldn't be using events for marketing opportunities aimed at children.

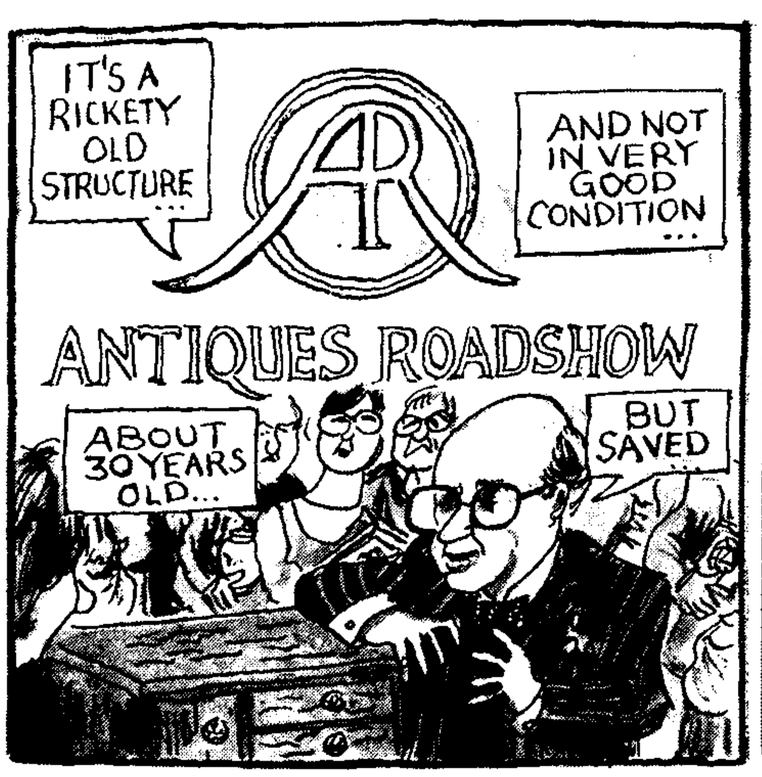
CURRENTLY doing the rounds on north London buses is a supposedly clever-clever set of ads for the "Be Cervix Savvy" campaign, courtesy of Camden's NHS primary care trust.

The idea that people should be more aware of the need for cervical screening is laudable. But Camden's ad hardly gives great confidence that the trust is itself "cervix savvy" – the people in the ads are all, er, men. Good luck to any fella out there who goes to get his cervix screened – and good luck to the trust and its ad agency in fending off the complaints from women who have taken offence.

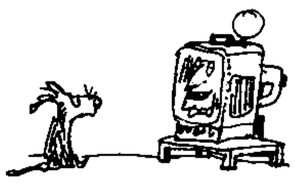
HOW ADVERTISING WORKS, PT 94

SPOTTED in a Stevenage car park, two adjacent billboards. To the left, an ad for Heineken's booze-a-licious five-litre draught keg, headline: "Let It Flow, Let It Flow, Let It Flow." Next to it, an ad for the Drink Aware Campaign, funded by donations from the alcohol industry, headline: "How Much Is Too Much?"

At a guess, five free-flowing litres of 5 percent lager is probably too much.



MEDIA NEWS



SKY TV finds itself embarrassed by a film channel it carries, called Film 24, over alleged infringements of copyright.

The movie channel, whose chairman Angad Paul is son of billionaire Labour peer Lord Paul and chief exec of daddy's steel-to-hotels-to-movies conglomerate Caparo, has been showing old Hitchcock films and US classics claiming they are in the "public domain". However, Sky and various film libraries that actually own the rights, are not convinced that Film 24 has understood the principles of copyright. Sky has contacted rights holders to ask them to check for infringements and Film 24 has already received at least one "cease and desist" letter.

The industry watchdog FACT, the Federation Against Copyright Theft, is aware of the apparent breaches but has turned a blind eye to Film 24, preferring to pursue small-scale pirate DVD factories. Should Angad, who was a producer on *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, be confused about how copyright works in the UK, he could always consult his wife Michelle Bonn. She's a litigation specialist at London solicitors New Media Law!

IN HIS appearance on *Celebrity Mastermind* on 28 December, David Lammy, MP for Tottenham and minister for higher education, proved a worthy successor to David Blunkett, whose lamentable performance in the series provided the nation with some post-Christmas cheer back in 2003.

After a so-so "specialist" round, answering questions on his hero Muhammad Ali, Lammy exhibited a startling level of general ignorance, falling down on his very first question – "What was the married name of Marie and Pierre, winners of the 1903 Nobel Prize for their discovery of radiation?" His response? "Antoinette".

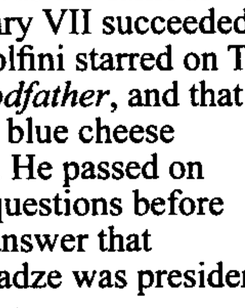
This set the tone for the rest of the round – Lammy thought Versailles was the famous Parisian state prison, that Henry VII succeeded Henry VIII, that James Gandolfini starred on TV as Mafia boss Tony in *The Godfather*, and that Leicester is a famous English blue cheese traditionally served with port. He passed on several more relatively easy questions before finishing his ordeal with the answer that (Georgia's) Eduard Shevardnadze was president of Yugoslavia until 2003.

To be fair to Lammy, he *did* know that Chris Martin sings with Coldplay, that Oprah Winfrey is an American TV host with a production company called Harpo, and that William Hague claimed to have drunk 13 pints of beer a day in his youth. Just the sort of knowledge an education minister needs.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link, BBC1

Anne Robinson: Which rock-folk group, named after an island off the coast of Northumberland, did Paul Gascoigne have a top ten hit with in 1990?



Contestant: Gerry and the Pacemakers.

Spin Star, ITV1

Bradley Walsh: What was the pen-name of the writer who based his bestselling books on his work as a vet in Yorkshire?

Contestant: George Orwell.

Brain Of Britain, Radio 4

Robert Robinson: Which British prime minister was born in Yorkshire in 1852?

Contestant: Jim Callaghan.

Downtown Radio, Northern Ireland

Johnny Hero: What "R" is Hillary Clinton's middle name?

Muriel: Er, um, is it Rottweiler?

WHEN BBC Broadcast was sold to Australian bank Macquarie back in 2005, various promises were made by the BBC about fair, competitive tendering for contracts for production and design work. But critics in the industry are puzzled why one company, Red Bee Media, has been so remarkably successful in clinching BBC contracts.

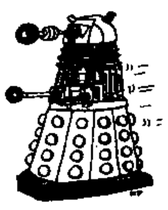
Red Bee designed the Olympics title sequence, rebranded BBC3, "refreshed" idents for CBBC, BBC2, BBC1's *Panorama*, BBC1's own idents and the idents for BBC London News, and it now handles all the day-to-day running of all BBC channels, including web streaming.

Red Bee is thus responsible for putting BBC programmes on air, feeding in live programmes and scheduling pre-recorded ones. Crucially, it was revealed in the BBC in-house mag *Ariel* that Red Bee also deals with "any staffing or editorial issues that might arise", meaning the BBC has handed over editorial control as well as design control to a private company.

Rival design companies have attempted to find out more about how the BBC has managed to hand out so many contracts to the same company. But so far they have come up with nothing, with the BBC arguing that such revelations would prejudice the commercial interests of both the BBC and independent production companies. Watch this space…

"Not another costume drama"

BIRTSPEAK 2.0



"Roo Reynolds joined the BBC this summer as Vision's portfolio executive for social media… he left IBM and the futuristic job title of 'metaverse evangelist' to develop BBC Vision's strategy in relation to social media, which means looking at how television can exploit everything from content communities to blogs and games, UGC and third-party social media sites like Flickr or Facebook. He also sits on Smurf, Vision's social media forum, which he describes as a 'clearing house for social media projects – it's not meant to be the control police'."

– Report in Ariel, *BBC in-house magazine*

DESPITE a run of well-reported gaffes, the BBC still left inexperienced staff to monitor output for accuracy and bias while more experienced bosses enjoyed their Christmas holidays.

This explained the headline "Scandal probe clears Obama team" over a BBC News story revealing that Barack Obama's staff had "no inappropriate discussions" with the scandal-mired Illinois governor Rod Blagojevich.

The "probe" was conducted by Greg Craig, one of Obama's trusted legal advisers, and was fully expected to find absolutely no fault with The One. Sadly there was nobody around to spot this blatant pro-Obama bias in the Beeb's coverage.

Nor was anyone around during a news item about the economy to prevent Matthew Amroliwala cross-examining Alan Duncan, the Tories' shadow business spokesman, by using the same "do nothing party" accusations repeated ad nauseam by Gordon Brown.

While some producers fail to detect any bias at all, others are oversensitive – especially when it comes to items attacking the government. In the same bulletin, figures obtained by the Tories under the freedom of information act about an increase in fatal stabbings were elaborately couched in caveats: stabbings are at record highs, "say the Conservatives", but these were "unconfirmed claims", "the Tories say", etc.

NUMBER CRUNCHING

6.1m Number of people who tuned in to BBC to see new Doctor Who being announced last Saturday

1.3m Number of people who tuned in to BBC to see new president of USA being announced last November

POP-EYE

THE campaign by outraged Jeff Buckley fans to cock a snook at Simon Cowell and propel their hero's version of the Leonard Cohen song *Hallelujah* to the top of the charts in preference to that by *X-Factor* winner Alexandra Burke came close to success – it made it to number two in the festive forty.

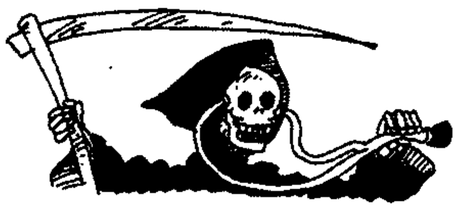
Their efforts are unlikely to have bothered the Svengali unduly, however. As the *Eye* pointed out last month (*Eye* 1225), Cowell's company Sony owns the publishing rights to Buckley's version of the song.

Buckley aficionados can, however, take comfort in their hero's rediscovery by a generation of new listeners, who will be able to explore his music further with the 19 January re-release of a compilation of his music *So Real: Songs From Jeff Buckley*. The record label behind it? Simon Cowell's Sony BMG!

SUPERMODELS

KERBER

MEDICINE BALLS



More top-ups

SHOULD top-up prescriptions be extended beyond cancer drugs?

The debate following the report by cancer tsar Mike Richards (*Improving access to medicines for NHS patients*) concentrated on what are touchingly known as "end of life medicines" (ie drugs that cost thousands of pounds in return for a few extra months of breathing). But there are plenty more mundane drugs the NHS is refusing to fund and that patients should at least be offered the chance to buy – if appropriate – for the lowest possible price.

This already happens with prescriptions for malaria prevention and erectile dysfunction, where patients have their consultation as part of the NHS and just have to pay for the cost of the drugs privately. In theory, GPs can issue private prescriptions for any licensed drug, even if the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) has given it the thumbs down. In practice this rarely happens.

When NICE restricts the use of a drug on the NHS, the issue is not that it doesn't work at all, but that it doesn't work well enough, in NICE's judgement, to justify the cost. So use is either not recommended or strictly limited.

A further complication is that although NICE's remit supposedly extends to public health, for some bizarre reason it doesn't evaluate vaccines or screening programmes. Vaccination recommendations come from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI), and although flu vaccination is one of the best ways to avoid flu (along with not letting someone with flu sneeze, cough or wipe their snot on you), the JCVI only sanctions free jabs for those at highest risk of death from flu (ie the over-65s or those with certain chronic diseases). Flu vaccines are often in limited supply but this year we have plenty that have not been used. Given the largest outbreak for eight years, the misery caused by influenza and the economic cost of time off work, it would seem sensible to offer the surplus as an NHS top-up to those under 65 who want to protect themselves.

If you do get flu, there are anti-viral drugs that can prevent the virus from replicating, reduce the duration of symptoms and likelihood of complications, and get you back to work more quickly. The effects are significant, though not huge, but as a course of treatment typically costs £20, NICE decided back in 2003 that NHS treatment should again be restricted to high risk groups only.

However, many healthy people who have suffered flu would happily pay £20 for the chance of the illness being curtailed. However, getting a private prescription is extremely difficult because the drugs are only effective if taken in the first few days of the illness, and the NHS actively discourages anyone with flu from seeing a doctor unless they're moribund. (Stay at home, avoid all physical contact and wipe your nose on your elbow, not your hand are the three top tips this year from flu experts). So virtually no one gets anti-viral drugs, not even those who NICE says should have them. Allowing pharmacists to diagnose flu and dispense anti-viral drugs – both privately and on the NHS – might be a solution.

Back in vaccine-land the JCVI chose Cervarix for the NHS cervical cancer vaccine programme, which only protects against cervical cancer and not against genital and laryngeal warts. The JCVI used an arbitrary points system to reach its decision which seems to bear little resemblance to the NICE evaluation process, and has repeatedly refused to reveal the price it's paying for the vaccine. Information about an alternative vaccine (Gardasil) with broader disease coverage was completely absent from the NHS Choices (*sic*) website until the *Eye* pointed it out, and now merits just a sentence. So while those in the know (ie doctors) are covertly paying privately for their daughters to have Gardasil, most people are getting no choice at all.

The Common's health select committee is currently inquiring into top-ups. Hopefully it will conclude that patients should be given accurate information about all licensed drugs, and then be given the chance to top up, if clinically indicated. The NHS may not be able to afford everything, but it is absurd to deny choice to those patients who can pay a bit more for drugs but can't afford a private GP, even if such a thing existed.

M.D.

More cock-ups

NONE of the doctors responsible for the Medical Training Application Service (MTAS) fiasco will face disciplinary action from the General Medical Council because their bad decisions weren't made in a clinical setting, junior doctors have been told.

The useless MTAS system, which was meant to match junior doctors to training vacancies, left thousands of qualified doctors without posts. It was condemned as unfair and slow, suffered technical failures and left doctors' personal details insecure (*Eyes passim*).

However, the GMC rejected the call for an inquiry into the doctors who were involved in developing the system, telling junior doctors' pressure group Remedy last week: "The allegations of misconduct must be concerned with poor performance in a clinical setting." This is rather baffling.

Eye readers will recall the case of TV psychiatrist Raj Persaud, who was suspended from practice earlier this year over "misleading and inappropriate" plagiarism in a book and various articles he wrote for medical journals and newspapers (*Eye* 1213) – hardly a "clinical setting". Indeed, numerous recent cases the GMC has handled relate to doctors' conduct entirely unrelated to patients. Cases from 2008 include several doctors suspended after motoring offences and another who looked at porn via hospital computers.

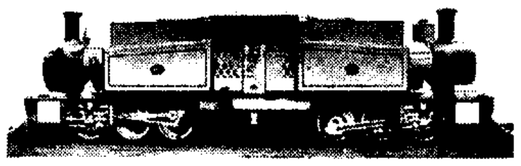
One hospital registrar was suspended for three months after over-claiming £214 in travel expenses and moonlighting as a locum while on study leave, while a junior doctor in Birmingham was suspended for eight months by the GMC for making a misleading claim for relocation expenses when moving out of his parents' home. Both were clearly cases of wrongdoing, but the cost to the health service was negligible compared to the harmful impact of the failed MTAS.

Curse of Gnome

THE future isn't looking too healthy for private-equity owned dialysis company Euromedic after the *Eye's* revelations last August of its record of infecting and abandoning patients in Poland and Turkey (see *Eye* 1217).

At the time an announcement was due on a £100m dialysis contract for hospitals in south London, for which Euromedic had claimed to have an "understanding" with the NHS. Five months on, no announcement is forthcoming. But don't celebrate just yet. Favourite to benefit from Euromedic's misfortune is US-German healthcare company Fresenius. And far from contributing to the diversity of healthcare provision the government insists it wants, the deal would give the firm a near 90 percent share of private dialysis in Britain and a majority of the dialysis equipment and consumables market.

All of which is a worry. For last year, to avoid prosecution Fresenius admitted to its role in a South African cartel carving up the market for intravenous medical products. And in 2000 the company was fined a record $486m in the US over frauds involving kick-backs for contracts and fictitious blood testing.



SIGNAL FAILURES

Freight not

A HIGHLIGHT of 2009 for Kent commuters will be the chance to pay a premium to travel over the high-speed line to St Pancras. The premium will be unpopular, however, because the price of existing Southeastern season tickets has been hiked by 3 percent above inflation each year to help pay for the faster service, due to start in December: commuters on the faster trains will thus pay a premium on premium fares.

But even that mark-up is dwarfed by what the government wants freight companies to pay to transport cargo along the high-speed line, which was built with taxpayers' cash and has been hugely under-used since its completion in 2007.

Ostensibly the government wants to shift more cargo on to the railways, but it has outlined freight charges for the new line which are almost 500 percent higher than freight charges per mile for ordinary Network Rail routes. That torpedoes the idea of bringing continental cargo wagons (too big for Britain's Victorian railways) into London from countries beyond the Channel tunnel. Clearly it's not a government priority to have fewer lorries passing through the tunnel (occasionally damaging the infrastructure by bursting into flames), which would cut freight carbon emissions and reduce congestion and danger from the endless streams of trucks on Kent's roads.

The government has another reason to keep freight off the high-speed line – Labour's pals in the air lobby. A consortium which includes the French government, Air France, Aéroports de Paris and La Poste is developing terminals at Charles de Gaulle airport specially for freight trains to use Europe's network of high-speed railways from 2012. One of its main planned routes is from Paris to Barking, east London. The consortium claims the cargoes' carbon footprint would be 17 times smaller on trains than on planes and trucks. A similar terminal is on the cards near Amsterdam's Schiphol airport.

Once express cargo starts whizzing around Europe in seat-less TGVs, yet another hole will be blown in Labour's grand plans for airport expansion. Heathrow particularly will be affected – it handles well over a million tonnes of freight each year. Eye-watering charges for using Britain's high-speed line should keep some or all of the potential UK cargo off the railways, and the new cargo TGVs would be too big to use old railways in Kent.

While this negativity might please the air lobby, it's an example of Britain burying its head in the sand. American parcels firm FedEx is a founding member of the French consortium; it regards the rail-freight idea as "economically promising" and aims to fly cargo into Paris for distribution by train to London, Frankfurt, Basel and other cities. As oil becomes scarcer and dearer, the airports that can forward freight by electric train could become the favoured hubs for long-distance express cargo.

'Dr B Ching'

ROTTEN BOROUGHS AWARDS 2008

Blue-Sky Thinker of the Year: Runaway winner **Andrea Hill** made national headlines when she was appointed chief exec of **Suffolk** county council in March because of the size of her salary – at £218,000 it is £31,000 more than the prime minister and £40,000 more than she was getting in her previous job in **Bedfordshire**. But *Eye* readers know Andrea – who ticks off staff who don't pronounce her name "*Arn*drea" – primarily for her devotion to the doctrine of "continuous improvement" and the crucial role of something called the "sigmoid wave", which one Bedfordshire resident said "sounds like something out of a brain-washing cult". After spending £200,000 putting staff at cash-strapped Bedfordshire on neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) courses, one of Arndrea's first acts at Suffolk was to spend £400,000 sending 400 people on NLP courses – with the very same small company, Fields of Learning, as in Beds. Just fancy that!

Masterminds of the Year: The team of contractors working for **Leeds** city council who went forth on 4 December, as snow lay deep and crisp and even, to mow the grass on the Seacroft estate while residents slipped and fell on icy, ungritted pavements.

Recruitment Consultant of the Year: Headhunters ***Rockpools*** produced a blue-sky shortlist when the post of chief executive of the London borough of **Newham** became vacant. It avoided applicants with long experience of local government in favour of thrusting types from the private sector. Labour mayor **Sir Robin Wales** cheered the "out of the box" appointment of **Roger Tucker,** whose career had been spent in oil prospecting. It was only when a junior member of staff Googled Tucker that anyone questioned the appropriateness of his stint as chief exec of African Arabian Oil, a company which prospected in Sudan in partnership with the Chinese national oil company. Sudan uses its oil revenues to buy arms from China, which it then uses against its own people in Darfur and elsewhere. Tucker was sent on his way with a pat on the bottom and very large cheque and "Sir" Robin was again left looking like a complete idiot – although in the virtually one-party state that is Newham, no one ever dares say so.

For Services to Literacy: **Northwards Housing**, a company which manages **Manchester** city council properties, sent a splendidly lucid leaflet to residents of a crumbling tower block, attempting to warn them of danger from falling pieces of concrete: *"There is a damager that you may get struck by some falling missionary... avoid putting yourself at unnecessary risk by limiting the amount of time you expose yourself out the window."*

Banker of the Year: "Don't let that woman anywhere near the finance committee" we joked, after **Surrey** county council's Tory planning committee chair **Pat Frost** made a pig's ear of it by recording a 6-5 vote *against* an application for a controversial mortar processing plant as a 7-6 vote *for*. But that was back in March – innocent times when we believed that most folk in local government were financially numerate and literate. Now, "after Iceland", we know most haven't a clue. One man who raised cluelessness to an art form was the Tory leader of the London borough of **Barnet, Mike Freer**. He told councillors that *he* couldn't be blamed for the council losing £27.4m in dodgy Icelandic banks because he had never bothered to review the council's investments. Ever. And in a former life he used to be, er, a banker. Quite.

Pin-up of the Year: Residents protesting about "over development" in **Lewes**, East Sussex, adopted the *Eye*'s own well-developed columnist **Glenda Slagg** as their standard-bearer.

Currying Favour Award: **Rochdale** Labour councillor **Ibrar Khan** thought his Lib Dem rival **Zulf Ali** must be "desperate" to offer voters a 10 percent discount at his clothes shop in an ad accompanying an election leaflet. No more desperate, surely, than a certain councillor, name of Khan, who had previously offered potential voters free vindaloos!

QUOTES OF THE YEAR

"When he turned around and saw me he offered me a cup of tea and a slice of cake." – witness tells employment tribunal of the moment he discovered a senior **Aberdeen** council officer discussing Uganda with a female colleague in the office.

"It's not the type of swimming pool you go swimming in – it's a water park." – **Swansea** council leader **Chris Holley** sees off complaints about restricted hours and high prices at a new leisure centre.

"Fat fucking dyke." – **Barking & Dagenham** council deputy leader **Liam Smith**'s mature response to a Tory lady's joshing after the Broon party lost a seat to the Conservatives at a council by-election.

"It has long been recognised that the festival site is host to a very significant amount of acoustic energy and inevitably there will be some community impact." – **Mendip** council environmental health officer **Keith Horton** on complaints about the noise from Glastonbury festival.

"Will not be renewing... embarrassed by revelations in Private Eye *re councillors."* – note attached to former member's entry on leaked **BNP** membership list.

Brass-necked Councillor of the Year: This year's out-and-away winner has to be Cllr **Asaf Ali** of **Oldham** council, who was arrested over the alleged rape of a 16-year-old waitress at the restaurant where he was a partner. The 37-year-old father of three at first denied everything, then changed his story to claim that the girl had consented to sex. The Crown Prosecution Service eventually decided not to prosecute, but the girl's mother maintained that Ali should resign, because even if he had not committed a crime in the eyes of the law, "morally he had a duty of care" to his employees. Ali did resign the Labour whip but has stayed on as an "independent" councillor and remains a member of the party.

Comeback of the Year: Ten years after his "moment of madness" on Clapham Common, and five after quitting the Welsh Assembly when the *Sun* snapped him "looking for badgers" in a gay cruising area, former Welsh Secretary **Ron Davies** was elected as an Independent to **Caerphilly** council – where he promptly did a deal which handed control of the hung council to his Plaid Cymru rivals in exchange for a cabinet seat.

Fraudster of the Year: **Lambeth** council is, of course, a notoriously easy touch, but the judges simply had to applaud the chutzpah of one of its caretakers, **Stephen Fabian-Adekunle**, who was paid by the council for five months while in prison in connection with a series of unrelated fraud offences.

Down With the Kids Award: To **Gordon Jenkins**, Tory member of **Bromley** council, whose discovery of Facebook enabled him to share his interest in applications such as "Panty Raid", "Flirty vs. Frigid" and "Kinky Poke" with a wider public. News that the "What Sex Toy are You?" quiz rated Cllr Jenkins as a pair of edible nipple tassles was too much information for Bromley's Tories, so he removed all the smut and posted a pic of himself and Baroness Thatch instead. Now that *is* weird.

Philistines of the Year: **Newham** council's cabinet member for "culture", **Jo Corbett**, distinguished herself by banning the author of a novel called *Billie Jo* from reading extracts at a public library in case anyone thought it referred to the Billie-Jo Jenkins murder case and took offence – even though the book had nothing whatever to do with the case, other than the coincidence of the title. But the winner was **Bournemouth** council, for banning everyday English expressions derived from Latin such as *bona fide*, *etc*, *e.g.* and *vice-versa* in case they confused the ignorant. The council's own motto, *Pulchritido et Salubritas*, stayed.

Martin Luther King award: the Scottish National Party's **Glasgow** councillor **Jahangir Hanif** was described by SNP MP **John Mason** as the victim of "racists and colonialists" after attracting criticism for taking his children on holiday to a lawless area on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and making them fire AK-47 assault rifles.

Funny You Should Bring That Up: **Ken Livingstone**'s former planning adviser at City Hall, **Elinor Young**, threw up after meeting new London mayor **Boris Johnson** in the lift on 6 May, thus confirming stories of Boris's powerful effect on women.

And not forgetting: **York** city council, for spending £40,000 on satnav systems to keep track of its dustcarts, then allowing eight of them to be stolen from unlocked vehicles; the London borough of **Richmond**, for consulting widely on planning matters – so widely that questionnaires were sent to addresses which included a bus shelter and a row of wheelie bins; and **Wiltshire** county council for setting up a website offering advice... to "pregnant "7-to-12 year-olds!

The Curse of Gnome

"We've got a good bunch of journalists and it's fucking funny... It's not exactly *Private Eye* doing Rotten Boroughs." – James Brown, consultant editor, on why people should buy the relaunched *Daily Sport*, May 2008.

Sport circulation when Brown dissed Britain's top-selling current affairs magazine? 95,000+.

Sport circulation now? 77,964.

NOOKS and CORNERS

ONE positive consequence of the economic "downturn" should be the abandonment of gratuitous, overweening new architectural projects like (with any luck) the colossal and fatuous "Shard" at London Bridge. Why build more offices in the City when scores of bankers and hedge-fund managers are now out of work? And why build more residential towers when Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool are already disfigured by dozens of empty blocks of unsellable buy-to-let flats?

Even so, as we enter 2009 the prospects for serious architectural heritage are grim. The proposed heritage protection bill has been "put on hold" because of "these difficult times", while the funding for English Heritage and thus for grants for historic buildings continues to be squeezed. According to shadow culture secretary Jeremy Hunt, the government's heritage budget has fallen by 38 percent since "new" Labour came to power in 1997. In addition, funds for historic buildings and other worthy causes have and are being siphoned off to pay for the London Olympics.

Times may be hard, but if it is thought desirable to encourage shopping to boost the economy, surely repairing historic buildings would also sustain employment as well as ensuring the future for an irreplaceable national asset on which our tourist industry is largely based?

Government policies endanger fine buildings in other ways. One now at risk is the celebrated Finsbury Health Centre opened in 1938 in the left-wing London borough of Finsbury (now part of Islington). Designed by Berthold Lubetkin and Tecton, it was a building in which doctors worked alongside other health professionals and as such provided a model for the future National Health Service. Now Finsbury's successor, Islington primary care trust, proposes to get rid of what was once the "pride of Finsbury", claiming it is too expensive to maintain.

The centre in fact works perfectly well, but has been neglected for some years – £1.5m earmarked for maintenance have gone unspent – and the trust's chief executive claims it is "not worth the money" as any restoration must now be carried out under Gordon Brown's favourite private finance initiative. This would involve repaying the debt over 20 years to a private company which would carry out the "refurbishment" and cost some £8m – twice the bill for a one-off restoration.

Among the fatuous reasons for closure is the breathtaking observation that "It was not built in the 21st century". Thus Islington PCT proposes to sell the building and transfer its functions to new polyclinics favoured by the government. As it is unlikely anyone will want to buy it, it is likely the Grade I listed building will be abandoned and become derelict. Lubetkin once said that "nothing is too good for ordinary people"; and his biographer, John Allan, has remarked that: "The Finsbury Health Centre is a leading example of the ideals of public service. The idea that it might be sold is a shocking testament to the abandonment of those social values".

But we are getting used to such shocks. In *Eye* 1225, it was described how Wirral council – having invested unwisely in Iceland – proposes to save £3.7m a year by closing 13 of its 24 public libraries as well as three leisure centres, two museums and a theatre. Old buildings are a nuisance, after all – especially as the council had already managed to run up a £10m backlog of repairs.

One victim is to be the old Town Hall in Hamilton Square, which now houses the Wirral Museum. The square is the glory of Birkenhead, a piece of Edinburgh New Town amid all the red brick, and the Town Hall which dominates it is a fine Classical pile of the 1880s. Now it is to be disposed of – which probably means years of neglect in the hope of demolition. Another is Birkenhead Central Library, a fine building of 1931-34, which is now considered "no longer fit for purpose" and so is to be replaced by a "modern facility" at the Europa Pools site. As the Central Library was purpose-built and is much used, we can only presume the new "facility" will not contain any books.

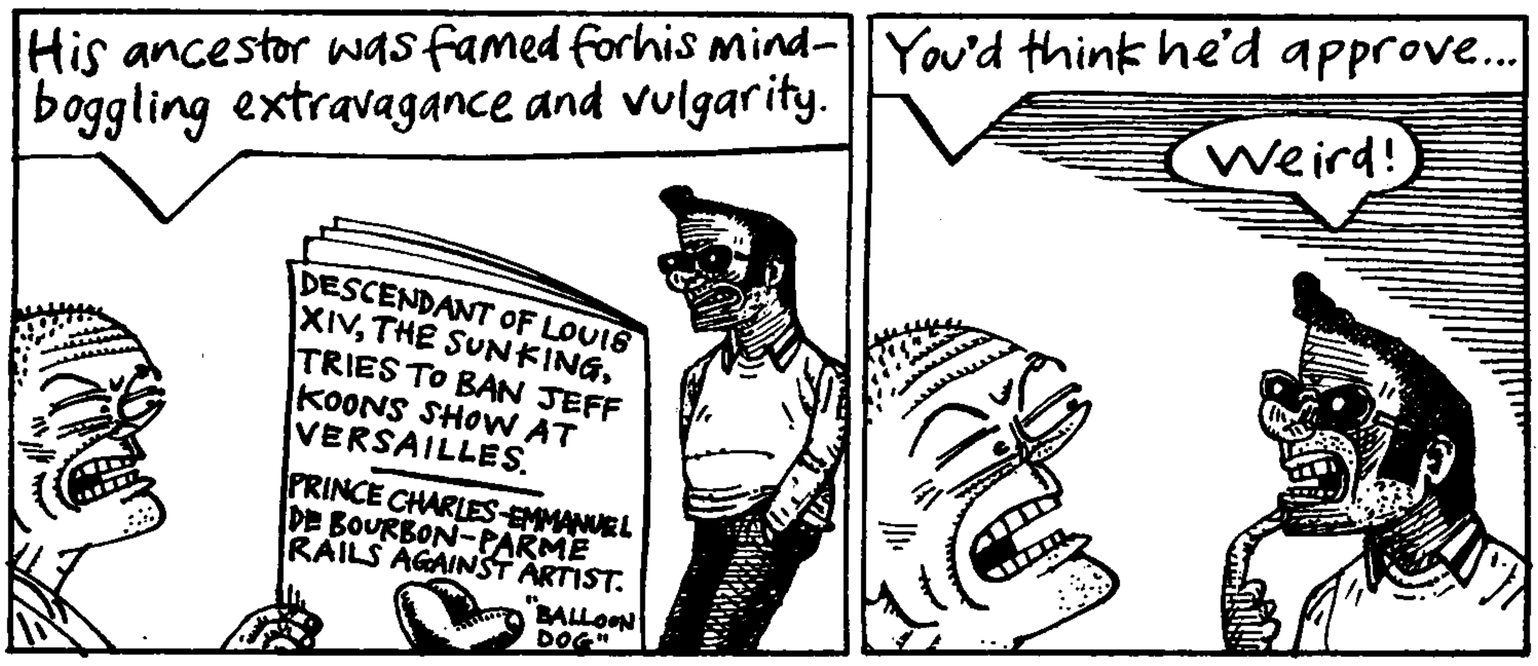
Finsbury Health Centre (Abram Games 1942)

Local authorities may well take their cue from government, the most Philistine Labour administration ever. For another example is the behaviour of the London borough of Waltham Forest in reducing the opening hours and sacking all the expert staff at the William Morris Gallery, no doubt as a prelude to disposing of this outdated and irrelevant institution altogether. Perhaps the brutish Labour councillors who have endorsed these decisions are simply unaware that the great William Morris – who was brought up in the Georgian house which is now the eponymous gallery – was a radical socialist who was a principle inspiration to the early Labour party and that the gallery and museum was opened in 1950 by none other than the Labour prime minister, Clement Attlee. But the truth is they could not care less. Morris's most recent biographer, Fiona MacCarthy, has commented that: "The attitude of Waltham Forest council to William Morris is crazily ignorant. It is astonishing a Labour council has done this. How could they call him a 'white imperialist'? He was the least imperialist figures of the Victorian period… he was also an early environmentalist thinker" – and of course founder of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

'Piloti'

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH


His ancestor was famed for his mind-boggling extravagance and vulgarity.
DESCENDANT OF LOUIS XIV, THE SUN KING, TRIES TO BAN JEFF KOONS SHOW AT VERSAILLES.
PRINCE CHARLES-EMMANUEL DE BOURBON-PARME RAILS AGAINST ARTIST.
"BALLOON DOG"
You'd think he'd approve...
Weird!

PASSENGERS WAITING FOR LIVERPOOL BUS THIS IS NOW A TRAIN

I-SPY

Deansgate Railway Station, Manchester

Submitted by Bob Barlow.

£10 paid for similar submissions.

(SAE required for return of photographs)

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

THE big debate in the music business is whether or not it's going to go down the tubes like everything else in 2009.

Bizarrely, ticket sales at venues like the Wigmore Hall are holding up, which might suggest that music's role as a refuge from the misery of daily life will be some sort of safeguard. But that certainly doesn't apply to CD sales, which are about to hit an all-time low.

If you've been in a CD store recently (though you probably haven't: that's the problem) you may have noticed how little floorspace is given over to CDs, ousted by cut-price DVDs. Last month the American press wrote about a CD retailer who now devotes half his space to, er, ice cream: "I can make 50 percent margins on ice cream sales. For every CD I lose two bucks."

On a grander scale, the opera houses are also looking anxiously at each other: not least towards Italy where three of the 14 significant companies (Naples, Genoa and Verona) are in receivership, with half the others facing of similar collapse. For a country that claims opera as central to its culture, it's a desperate situation.

The good news, however, is that whatever rubbish 2009 does produce, it will bring to an end one of the more pernicious examples of artistic compromise, deceit and pantomime.

For more than 20 years, a wealthy American called Gilbert Kaplan, founder of *Institutional Investor* magazine, has given large amounts of money to orchestras – including the London Symphony – in return for which he has given public concerts with them… as conductor.

Kaplan only ever conducts one piece: Mahler's massive 2nd Symphony. But doing so over and over, he's managed to promote the idea of himself as a world authority on the score. The fact that he doesn't do it well is something no orchestra has dared admit, so long as those cheques keep coming.

In the case of the LSO he was even allowed to make a commercial recording, albeit for the small label Conifer. After certain critics were leaned on to write kind things about the disc, a myth spread that Kaplan was a great maestro with a grasp of this repertory that no one else – Abbado, Barbirolli, Klemperer, Rattle – quite had.

To be fair, Kaplan's devotion to the piece was undeniable and charming. But this didn't alter the fact that he was really no musician and was undeserving of the eulogies penned by writers like the *Evening Standard*'s Norman Lebrecht. Only last month Lebrecht was at it again, flying to New York to savour Kaplan's latest Mahler 2, with the New York Philharmonic.

After the performance, and Lebrecht's inevitably triumphal review, however, the bubble finally burst. The NY Phil players decided they'd had enough, demanded a meeting with management and insisted that whatever Kaplan may or may not have contributed to Philharmonic funds, he should never be allowed to conduct them again.

They even posted their views on the internet, denouncing Kaplan as a "charlatan" whose conducting was a "woefully sad farce" and insisting that from now on they and their colleagues should "stand firm against any attempts to promote this imposter".

This was a full-scale, rank-and-file rebellion; and Kaplan won't be appearing with the NY Phil again. It's hard to believe the LSO or any other credible ensembles will issue invitations either. The only question is how they, and Mr Lebrecht, will account for their former enthusiasm.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

CHRISTMAS PHOTO BUBBLE COMPETITION

QUEEN MEETS PORN KING

THANKS for the hundreds and hundreds of entries for the competition most of which were sadly too disgusting to print in a family satirical magazine.

All submissions involving the phrase "Nice muff, Ma'am" were ignored, as were references to "collars and cuffs", "beavers" and the need for Her Majesty to wear gloves. The often-asked questions, "Is that a rolled-up *Daily Star* in your pocket or are you just pleased to see me?", "Have you come far Mr Desmond?" and "Why is your handshake so firm?" were also disallowed on the grounds of taste. The entry suggesting the exchange "What do you do? (Queen) "I don't do Dutch or anal" (Desmond) was doubly disqualified since it came from an employee of Mr Desmond and the *Eye* does not want to encourage disloyalty.

The prize goes to **Nick Rowland** for his more elevated effort.

Queen: *Are you after a title?*
Des: *No thanks, I've got loads: Asian Babes, Hot Housewives...*

HOW NEWS WORKS

THE ironic tale of the Cornish birdwatcher who failed to find a "rare" snow bunting in Norway, then came home and found one in her garden, first appeared in the *Western Morning News*, but rapidly spread to fill empty new year pages in the *Times, Telegraph, Mirror, Sun, Daily Mail* and far beyond – even appearing in papers in New Zealand.

The news had nature correspondents all a-twitter, with the *Mail* bizarrely claiming that the snow bunting was thought to be totally extinct in Britain. Hardly – according to the RSPB, around 15,000 of them over-winter here.

Unfortunately, not one of the papers appears to have consulted their bird books, as the bird in the photos isn't a snow bunting at all, but a chaffinch (albeit a partial albino one).

Snow bunting

Not a snow bunting

LUVVIES

"I saw him and he was glowing. I told him it was like God was shining a flashlight on him."

Jenny McCarthy on first meeting Jim Carrey

Submitted by Didi Sabbagh.

Letters

Private Eye

Bones of contention

Sir,

Ratbiter casts a sceptical eye on chiropractors' claims to cure physical problems away from the spinal column, but the truth is more interesting than he suggests. Spinal problems may cause "referred" pains and sensations remote from the spine, as a blow on the ulnar nerve next to your "funny bone" may cause pain in the hand.

For many years it has been realised by perceptive physicians that disorders of the spine may cause painful symptoms that suggest pleurisy, gallstone and kidney stone pain, migraine and many other peripheral symptoms. Unfortunately, many doctors, who share Ratbiter's narrow vision, give these incorrect diagnostic labels to their patients' symptoms, and then fail to help with inappropriate simplistic treatment. When such sufferers take themselves to a therapist who manipulates their spine, and cures them, it is understandable that both parties assume the manipulation has cured their pleurisy, gallstones, or whatever spurious diagnosis they had been earlier given.

Chiropractors do good work. If the rationale for their treatments is confused, the fault is not all theirs.

Yours sincerely,
NOEL THOMAS (NHS GP for nearly 40 yrs, not a chiropractor),

Via email.

Lookalike

Gest

Jones

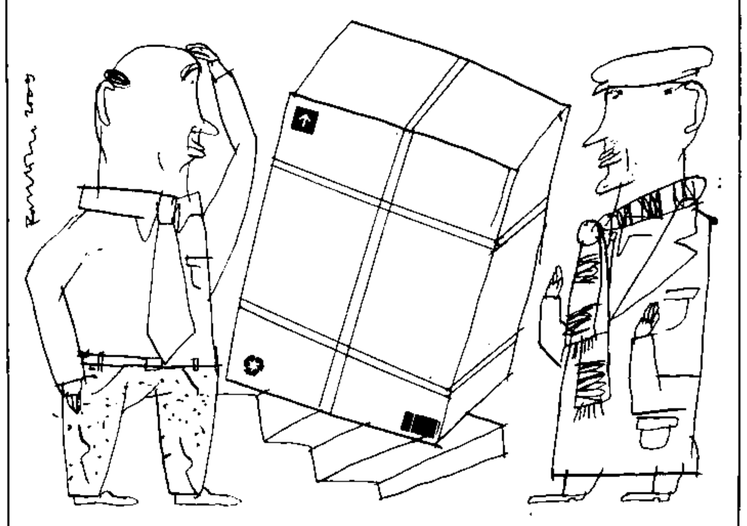
Sir,

I hope it's not unusual, and others can see the similarities between these two icons of our times.

Yours,
GUY HALL,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See



"I got a bad back, mate. But I'll risk it and give you a hand"

Chalke uplands

Sir,

Re "Academy Schools", In The Back, Eye 1225.

Steve Chalke was inspirational at Tonbridge Baptist Church in the early 1980s where I attended several of his services. He was one of the best speakers in a wide-ranging international experience of Christian clerics over many years.

Yours etc,
JOAN WOOLARD (Mrs),

Spalding, Lincs.

Hay-on-Wye-oh-why

Sir,

Richard Booth has been my client since 1991, and I know Paul Harris, and probably know, or know of, most of the other booksellers at this "packed meeting" last week, which was held when they knew he was not well (Books & Bookmen, Eye 1225).

Not one of them has the guts or the charisma to take his place. Long live the King, I say, and down with the Commonwealth.

Hay Festival and the multitude of bookshops, antique shops, trinket shops have been parasites feeding on his success.

When Richard comes back in the spring, hopefully he will be able to give them all a Royal pardon, otherwise I think there will be a great deal of bloodshed in Hay, and I will be there with my knitting.

EVE REDWAY
(Bookkeeper to Richard for yonks),

Via email.

Illinois governor charged with soliciting brides in scandal which may embroil president-elect's key aides

Gruaniad website

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER

I HATE DEFACING PRISTINE GEORGIAN ARCHITECTURE BUT WITH THE CRIME-WAVE AFFECTING THIS AREA INSTALLING A BURGLAR ALARM IS SIMPLY A FACT OF LIFE...
DOES IT EMIT A HIGH PITCHED CACOPHONY? IS THERE A DIRECT LINK TO THE LOCAL POLICE STATION?
TOO OBVIOUS! WE'VE RIGGED THIS BABY TO BLAST OUT MAHLER'S 5th. SYMPHONY...
THE PHILISTINES ARE BOUND TO FLEE EMPTY HANDED!

Anagram

Sir,

Can I be the 32,767th person to belatedly point out to you that George Bush is an anagram of "Bugger! Shoe!"?

Yours,
ANNE A. GRAM
(pp. Philip Phlop),
Via email.

Thumbs down

Sir,

First a favourable review of "I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here" and then a hearty recommendation for Paul O'Grady's life story along with a review of a Take That album. I do not wish to cancel my subscription but it may be best to start addressing it to the wife.

She has suggested you try Hollyoaks and Emmerdale next.

Yours,
TONY BROWN,
Ashington.

Purple prose

Sir,

It was heartening to discover a cheery book review in respect of Paul O'Grady's new autobiography...

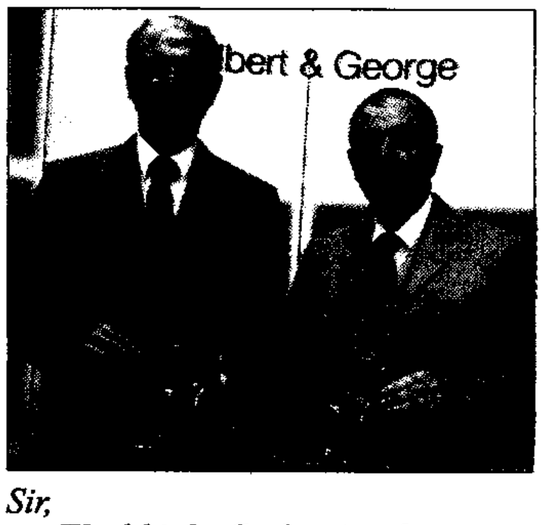
In 20 years of reading the Eye, I don't think I have ever read a positive one within the Literary Review. Hats off to the reviewer and I hope the Ed doesn't fire you... (and make you re-apply for your job).

Best regards,
CAMERON LESLIE,
Bathgate.

● He's still sacked. Ed.

Lookalike

Gilbert & George



David & Frederick

Sir,

Would it be Sarkastic of me to suggest that there seems to be an uncanny resemblance between the charming Barclay twins and the scatalogically-inclined performance artists Gilbert and George?

Yours,
MIKE WADE,
Via email.

Claws for thought

Sir,

For those of us dummies wot ain't 'ad the pleasure (and pain?) of a public skool educashon, would you please enlighten us as to which large lizard's name is synonymous with "prefect" (Dumb Britain, Eye 1226)?

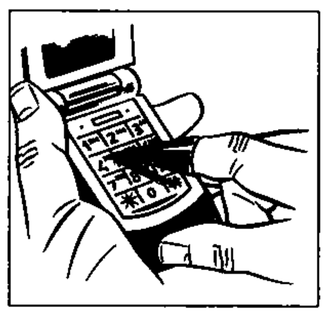
Regards,
GRAEME INNES-JOHNSTONE,
Elland, West Yorks.

● "Monitor" – quite a common usage in non-fee-paying schools too. Ed.

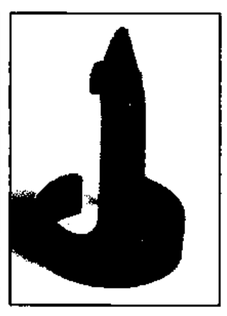
Art imitating life

Sir,

Even prior to the publication of Eye number 1226 the fiendish foreigners had ripped off your brilliant idea for the Digitexter (Gnome's Thriftmas Giftmart).



Digitexter



PDA truetip

For proof you need only Google "pda truetips".

I suggest you hire Peter Carter whatsit's to go out and sue the bally lot of them.

Regards,
PHILIP GREEN
(not that one, another one),
Rotterdam.

Photo fits

Sir,

Re Nooks and Corners, Eye 1226. It was a treat to see my rather amateurish photography appear (via Wikipedia) on page 12 of Eye 1226, depicting in all its glory West Bromwich's less-than-lovely "The Public".

As an Eye reader of many years, I shall now look forward to the greater honour of having this letter printed, which will neatly fulfil your obligation under the relevant Gnu Free Documentation and Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike licences to give me a credit!

Yours etc,
DAVID WATERSON,
Solihull, West Midlands.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"At this stage of my career I regard any win as a result."
RONNIE O'SULLIVAN, Radio 5 Live
(John McIlveen)

"If your fridge is full this Christmas, use nature's refrigerator – your car!"
ANTHEA TURNER, GMTV
(Richard E. Wright)

"He [Robinho] is passing the ball like an expensive plate of mince pies."
DAVE MILLS, Radio 5 Live
(Roger Powell)

"Funding is to be cut for sports where targets were missed, such as archery."
Radio 5 Live
(Joseph Williams)

"He [Zaheer Khan] is literally making the ball talk..."
ARUN LAL, Sky Sports
(Katerina Vittozzi)

It could be him...

Sir,

The BBC's online Spanish news service (Mundo.com 21 December) contains an interesting article on the popularity of the national lottery in these times of economic crisis. Apparently, the Spanish lottery is known as "El Gordo" and leads the world in the amount it pays out. Surely not?

Yours faithfully
H. BOSS (retired),
Via email.

Hacked off

Sir,

I am the freelance reporter named in Hackwatch, Eye 1225. Your wholly inaccurate account of my involvement in covering Shannon Matthews' disappearance was not given the slightest chance at accuracy since you failed to contact me to check any of the information presented in the piece as fact.

In 1225, you wrote: "As the rag [the Sun] also reported: 'Madeleine McCann's heart-broken parents pledged £25,000 to help find missing Shannon after being pestered to on behalf of Shannon's grasping mum Karen... One man even hammered on their front door demanding they chip in'." After making extensive efforts to contact Clarence Mitchell, the McCanns' spokesman, I did go to the house but did not get as far as the door before the McCanns emerged on their way to church. I explained who I was, why I was there, passed Mr McCann my contact details and left. I have had no other contact with the McCanns.

You also wrote: "A police investigation earlier this year, following complaints by McCann spokesman Clarence Mitchell, revealed that the only man to visit the McCanns' home inquiring about their intentions towards the Matthews family was one Barry Keevins, a freelance hack who had been told to do so by... the Sun." There was an investigation but it was launched after I complained to West Yorkshire police when stories about a man claiming to be a freelance journalist hammering on the McCanns' door demanding money appeared in The Sun and BBC. I do not know who contacted the BBC or The Sun.

In addition, you wrote that: "His thoughtful mission resulted in the paper's exclusive of 25 February: 'Kate and Gerry: We Pray for Shannon'." The story was not exclusive as I was also working for two other papers on February 24, who both used the story.

BARRY KEEVINS
(Freelance journalist),
Via email.

Pedantry Corner

... Self-denying ordnance? (Sackwatch, Eye 1226) Would that be useful for avoiding shooting yourself in the foot? – except when you mean ordinance, of course.

R FROST.

... I was intrigued to learn (Satanic Panic Part 1, Eye 1225) that the Italian Corriere della Serra, or "Greenhouse Courier", has given space to a story about public prosecutors and Satanic cult conspiracies, but puzzled that your correspondent should report on these rather than the articles in the more authoritative Corriere della Sera ("Evening Courier"), the respected Milanese newspaper.

GILLIAN TAIT.

... I was disappointed by your cartoon in Eye 1224 implying that Ford is in financial trouble. I had hoped that your organ would not make the same mistake as many recent TV and radio reports that refer to the "Big 3" as though they were all in the same predicament. As any keen observer of the global car industry will attest, Ford is in a very different position to its US competitors. It is in pretty good shape in the States, in great shape in Europe, and unlike GM and Chrysler, does not need a hand-out from the US tax payer to keep going. Sloppy journalism, even if it's funny, can cost jobs.

S. MAX (COTY 2007).

... Was Sally Jockstrap consulted re the Ad Nauseam column in Eye 1225, in which reference is made to an F1 car's "tail fin". Very 1950s. Honda's "Earth Dreams" message was in fact located on their cars' sidepods and wings.

CONRAD BESSANT.

... I hate to be pedantic (not true, of course) because I loved the cartoon (First Drafts, Eye 1226), but the first telephone call was received by Bell's assistant, Thomas Watson. As Bell himself made the call, surely his own number should take second place?

COLIN MACDONALD.

... Craig Brown (Nigella's Christmas Turkey, Diary, Eye 1226) may drool at the thought of a turkey with its legs 'akimbo', but I certainly do not.

The word akimbo refers to a posture with ones arms, (never with ones legs) as with hands on hips and elbows projecting outwards. (15th Century "in kenebowe", literally: in "keen bow", that is, in a sharp curve).

BRIAN LEEDHAM.

... As a brass band enthusiast, I was delighted to see mentioned in the Popeye column of Eye 1226 the Brighouse and Catterick Brass Band. Are they in any way related to the Brighouse and Rastrick Brass Band?

And, as for the silliness of made-up names, surely enough is enough.

HUGH FFONIUM.

Pseudo names

... This business of publishing unbelievable noms de plume in your magazine is becoming ridiculous.

BERNARD MADOFF.

... As a reader from the UAE, I am confused as to why your raders would send in letters to you with obviously made-up names.

This would never happen in my country.

SHEIKH YOURBOOTY.

... Your decision to continue publishing letters from people who have clearly made up the appended name for a putative comic effect makes me wish for some form of temporary release from the world's silliness.

LORD NUMB.

... Over the last few months you have featured letters from correspondents signing off with false names for intended humorous effect. At first this was fairly amusing but the longer it continues, the less it works. Let this be the last word on the matter.

LAURA D. MINISHINGRETURNS.

... Correspondence from persons with fictitious names is becoming a bit of a bore.

ENA FFAUL-REDDY.

... I believe this pseudo name silliness should be drawn to a close.

ANNETTE CURTAIN.

... No more anonymous letters please.

ANNE ONNYMOUS.

... This puerile correspondence featuring obviously false names is threatening to take over the magazine.

It is driving me mad – so much so that, were I a subscriber, I might threaten to cancel.

IT MUST STOP!!!

ARFUR FFOULKES-AYCKE.

... I am utterly outraged at how your organ chooses to invest my annual fee on these egotistical self-promoting readers with obviously made-up names.

You are worse than the banks and you have certainly cut my interest.

IVOR CANCELLED-
MYSUBSCRIPTION

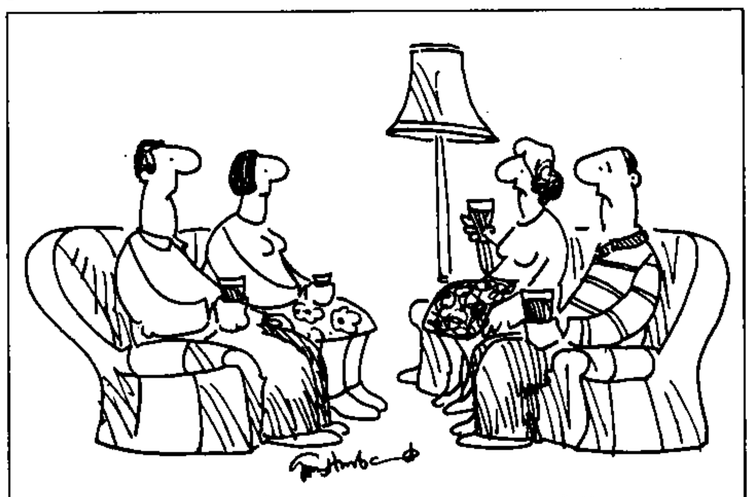
... May we please have a late, or even final, word on this topic?

U.R. BOARIN,
I.M.P. STOFF,
C. SAND,
D. ZISST.

... When will your tedious and silly section on made-up names finally come to an end?

WENDY FATLADYSINGS.

● Due to the large number of complaints received, this correspondence is now closed. To read these complaints in full, visit www.private-eye.co.uk on Friday, 9 January. Ed.



"So what time's your taxi?"

Letter from **Singapore**

from Our Own Correspondent

SINGAPORE may be facing the worst recession in its history, but unlike our gullible American friends, we are not going to be seduced by empty calls for "change". At least that's what our technocratic prime minister Lee Hsien Loong told us at the annual conference of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP).

He explained that a two-party system cannot possibly work in Singapore because the talent pool in our city-state of nearly 5m people is too small. While Ireland, New Zealand and Norway, which have even smaller populations, have had no problem combining economic growth and vibrant multi-party democracy, judging by some of our government's recent foul-ups, perhaps he's right.

Our sovereign wealth funds – Temasek and GIC –have run up massive losses after pumping more than US$20bn of our cash into ailing investment banks such as Citigroup, Merrill Lynch and UBS just months before their share prices collapsed. Who was responsible? These highly-secretive funds refuse to discuss how their investments are made; but Temasek is led by the PM's wife, Ho Ching, and Lee is the deputy chairman of GIC, with his father and former PM Lee Kwan Yew in the chairman's seat.

The unyielding Lee senior led the country from 1959 to 1990 and although he stepped down as PM in 1990, has continued to draw a state salary, first as "senior minister" and, now, as "minister mentor". Nepotism? Surely not!

Those who have questioned the ability or authority of our rulers – from international newspapers such as the *Wall Street Journal* to our tiny coterie of harassed opposition activists – have usually faced costly libel suits.

The Lees are adept at using Singapore's defamation laws, based on the same strict rules applied in Britain, to silence criticism of the government. They have brought countless defamation suits over the years and never lost a single one.

They have also managed to bankrupt the few among us willing to speak out, including regularly-imprisoned opposition leader Chee Soon Juan –ordered to pay the Lees S$610,000 damages in October - and the recently-deceased J.B. Jeyaretnam, our first-ever opposition MP.

Human Rights Watch warns that "using defamation laws to silence peaceful political speech makes a mockery of Singapore's claim to be a model democracy". But merely by questioning the fairness of our legal system, one runs the risk of imprisonment.

The *Wall Street Journal* was only fined after being found guilty of contempt in November, but in the same month three men were jailed for turning up at the supreme court wearing T-shirts depicting kangaroos in judge's robes. And Gopalan Nair, a Singapore-born lawyer who sought political asylum in the US, was jailed for two months in September for criticizing the judiciary on his blog. Like others who have championed free speech in Singapore, Nair now faces serious financial difficulties and has had to appeal for donations.

Human Rights Watch believes Singapore has "nothing to fear" from a vocal opposition but our masters think differently. They have a lot to lose being among the best-paid politicians in the world. While your Mr Brown earns a mere £190,000 and George W. Bush a paltry £260,000, our PM is paid £1.3m a year.

According to Lee senior, high public sector salaries are vital to prevent the kind of corruption that has wreaked havoc on so many of our Asian neighbours. And his son says that "as long as PAP provides clean and good government, and the lives of Singaporeans improve, the country is much better off with one dominant party".

With opposition activists banged up or cowed into silence, our pisspoor domestic media owned by the state and foreign newspapers hamstrung by fear of legal action, how are we to know the government is as clean as it insists?

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "It's not easy to represent theological ideas by using taste buds alone," Blaise Poyet told a press conference in Geneva, "so the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches set me an interesting challenge. For me, Jean Calvin was just a reformer I learned about long ago at school, but when I was asked to capture his essence in chocolate form, I could not resist. The key thing for Calvin was the glory of God, His excellence, His perfection. So naturally, I chose a chocolate that we chocolatiers find exceptional, rare, and flawless."

Poyet, a master chocolatier from Maison Poyet in Vevey, was unveiling his new Calvin bon-bons (priced at £11.50 per dozen), ahead of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant reformer's birth in 2009. "The first layer is a smooth and runny praline mix, 'reformed' with salt from the Swiss Alps. The second layer uses 68% cocoa paste from Bolivia, to represent Calvin's theology of the glory and perfection of God. This is topped with caramel, to represent Calvin's exceptional tenderness, and a taste of lemon verbena, representing his ability to plant and sow. Our creations are not just chocolates with a logo. We take our research seriously, and include only local ingredients that were used in Calvin's day. Except for the chocolate, of course, which was completely unknown in Switzerland at the time." *(Church Times, 7/11/08. Spotter: Justin Meggitt)*

– ● –

● *"Our attention was initially drawn to Keith Weatherley," a police officer told the Local Court in Newcastle, New South Wales, "because he was parked in a no-stopping zone. As we approached his vehicle, we could see that he was doing something with his hands in his lap, and we thought he might have a gun, so we drew our own weapons. However, when we looked into the vehicle, we saw that he was sitting with his penis in a jar of pasta sauce.*

"We asked him to get out, but he drove off, so we got back into our car and followed him, with our lights flashing. After ten minutes, we stopped him in Centenary Drive, but he still refused to leave his car. We tried to pull him out, but he resisted, and continued pleasuring himself with the pasta jar in between bouts of wrestling. He was eventually overpowered with batons and capsicum spray. After searching his car, we recovered a 750-millilitre jar of pasta sauce, a quantity of pornography, a homemade sex aid, a pair of women's stockings, and a Jack Russell terrier."

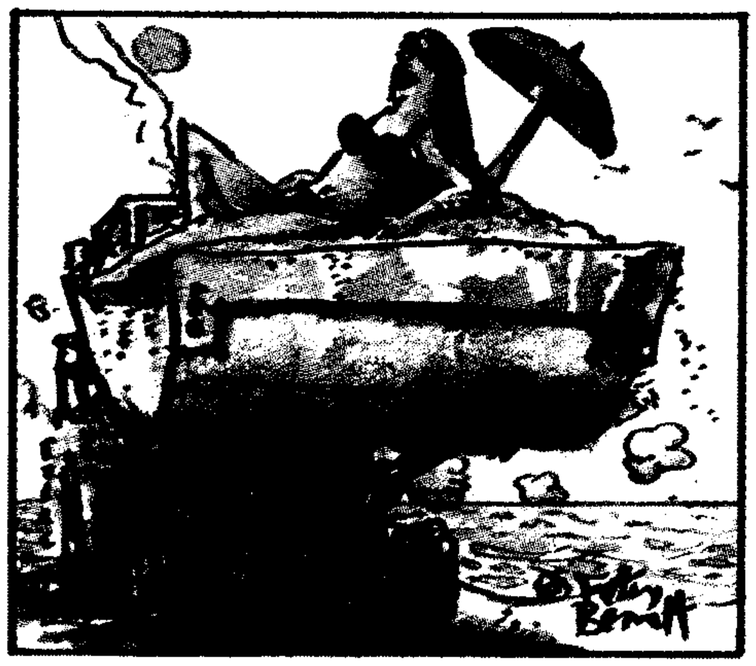
Later, Magistrate Elaine Truscott asked Weatherley why he had behaved as he did. "I resisted the police," he replied, "because I was trying to make myself decent."

Weatherley was found guilty of offensive behaviour and fined $600. (Adelaide Advertiser, 19/11/08. Spotter: Steve Byrne)

– ● –

● "Make no mistake. These thieves are stealing our beaches," Ernesto Diaz of the Department of Natural Resources told reporters in Puerto Rico. "All over the Caribbean, sand is disappearing at night, snuck away to feed the construction industry. Over the past five years, they've stolen most of the beach at Isabela in the north, and now they are stealing the beaches on Vieques. Where will it all end?"

The theft of beaches has become a serious problem all over the Caribbean. "In Jamaica," added Minister of Works & Environment Joseph Gilbert, "hundreds of truckloads of sand have been stolen from beaches, exposing coastal towns to rough seas. Until recently, most homes were built from wood, but now builders prefer concrete, so there is a ready market for stolen sand. In Barbuda, thieves dug a 23-foot crater on the beach, so deep that it contaminated the local aquifer with saltwater, and made it



undrinkable. Even when we catch the thieves, they only face a fine of $190, which is less than the value of a single truckload of sand. In the old days, they only used shovels, but now they use heavy diggers and front loaders, so they can steal entire beaches in just a few nights." *(Caribbean Update, 26/10/08. Spotter: Anon)*

From The Message Boards

Members of the online community respond to the major issues of the day...

Archbishop of Canterbury: 'Treasure fellow human beings in 2009'

I picked him up once when he was an ordinary vicar. Interesting man, gave me an apple for a tip. Anyway his speech reminded me of the mixed race couple that just had twins, one white and one black. (Bill and Bens we used to call them, but you can't say that now with health and safety.) The same thing happened before, so they now have two black girls and two white ones. The year ahead doesn't look too clever for the old cabbying game, but that lovely couple and their beautiful girls put everything in perspective. We're all the same under the skin – just people with love to share. ***Chris_the_cabbie***

proud of u mate ☺ – ***Matty_the_hammer***

Muddle-headed thinking has destroyed a once-great race. Time to end the disastrous democratic experiment – ***Sword_of_Truth***

Anyone goes near them lovely girls I swear Ill do time – ***Family_man***

god bless cris the cabby an god bless sara payne mbe in the new year's honur's but y not dame sara ● an y not dame maddie and sir baby p ● ● ● – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

Has Rowan Williams signed the Facebook petition? They did no more than ban the picture of the breastfeeding lady breastfeeding. Insofar and inasmuch as she did so do, then she did no more than the Virgin Mary, who did no more than the same for Our Lord The Baby Jesus Christ. – ***Mr_Salmon***

god bless baby jc an angel in heven – ***Justice_4_Maddie***

I saw the picture, it is beautiful and natural. I have it as my screensaver at work. – ***Maximilian***

As a mother I agree it is natural, but it could have been seen by children too young to understand. – ***Emily***

I'm sucking a Murray Mint extra hard while thinking of the breastfeeding lady and supporting her cause. – ***Murray_Maniac***

Great stuff guys! All the best for 2009! – ***Bogbrush***

PRIME MINISTERIAL DECREE NO. 35

From the Desk of the Supreme Leader

Comrades,

It is my distressing task, at what should have been a time of goodwill, with the emphasis on "good news", to have to answer the baseless smears and calumnies perpetrated against your Supreme Leader by a claque of superstitious, recidivist reactionaries, namely the bishops of the Orthodox Church of England.

This evil coterie of priestly parasites have set themselves up to accuse me of moral decadence and of "nourishing a culture of empty consumerist greed".

What right have these hypocritical prelates to preach the virtues of thrift and prudence when, as is well known, they live in the lap of luxury off the backs of poor, hard-working British families?

How dare the so-called Bishop of London, the bearded popinjay Comrade Rt Rev Chartres, a sycophantic toady to the Royal Family, er, how dare he lecture me on the evils of a materialistic lifestyle when it is well known that he neglects his spiritual duties in order to luxuriate on *Mediterranean* cruises in the company of the pampered bourgeoisie and the over-indulged acolytes of Swan-Hellenicism as they sip expensive cocktails while the hard-working British proletariat is forced to stay at home shopping round the clock in their gallant efforts to stimulate economic growth? That far-sighted prophet of the previous Age of Change, Comrade Milton, had the exact phrase for such episcopal back-slidism when he said, "The hungry sheep look up and are not fed, because the shepherd is off on an Eastern Mediterranean freebie."

Clearly I have no need to respond to the comments of these irrelevant relics of mediaeval bigotrism with anything other than contempt.

I am certainly not going to answer their points in detail, because it is self-evident that they are wholly in the wrong.

As the British people are only too well aware, I have not spent the past decade boasting vaingloriously about the growth of the British economy or my outstanding achievement in bringing an end to the enervating cycle of boom and bust.

No, what I have done is to act, while the Bishops have merely indulged in idle chatter. While they sipped sherry in their palaces, I was busy building schools, hospitals, eco-towns and much-needed Titan prisons the length and breadth of the land.

I was the one who had the moral courage to borrow ever-larger sums of money to sustain the consumer boom for the hard-working benefit claimants who are the backbone of Britain – whilst these mitred mountebanks robbed the poor box to provide Waitrose-style delicacies for themselves, their wives and their live-in boyfriends.

No wonder that their churches are empty and going to rack and ruin, unlike the bustling retail outlets of our British high streets, thanks to the inspired strategies of Brownite-Darlingist bailoutism.

May I leave these crapulous crozier-clutchers with this thought? That the present American-engineered economic downturn will prove for all of us a real Test of Character. I think it is clear that some people have already passed the test with flying colours. I am sure that I do not have to spell out that I am referring here to your Supreme Leader, who has single-handedly saved the world from economic catastrophe.

Others, however, have only too clearly failed this test. I will not insult the intelligence of our episcopal friends by pointing out that I am referring to them.

Yours,

Gordon Brown

COMRADE BLAIR
Two Minutes Hate

Former Comrade Blair has once again demonstrated his contempt for his political duty by his failure to acknowledge the achievements of your Supreme Leader in maintaining a decade of economic growth in Britain, attributing it merely to "luck".

Let me remind this money-grubbing running dog that if "luck" played any part in the process, it was "lucky" for Blair that he had me at his right hand making all the important decisions (except the ones about going to war obviously).

And, talking of war, let us not forget that at a time of world crisis in the Middle East, Former Comrade Blair, our so-called Special Envoy for the region, is conspicuous only for his absence, no doubt sunning himself on some holiday freebie provided by one of his decadent entrepreneurial capitalist sharkite cronies, such as Comrade Sir Cliff Richard. G.B.

THE SUPREME LEADER'S NEW YEAR PROMISES FOR 2009

1. I promise to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.
2. I promise interest rates will be high for savers and low for borrowers.
3. I promise to bale out the banks again, after my totally successful baling out of them last year.
4. I promise to make more promises than ever before.

The Year of Our Lord Mandelson 2009.

SPIRIT OF THE BLITZ!

"Never in the field of human history has so much been owed by so many."

Taken from The Little Brown Book, Chapter 94: "On the value of quantitative easing as a euphemism for the need to print money"

R-DAY!

The Countdown Begins – As The World Waits With Bated Breath

by Our Media Staff **Fern Sex**

TENSION is running high as the minutes tick away to the moment the world has been anxiously awaiting – the return of Jonathan Ross to the airwaves... What the BBC bosses are calling R-Day!

And there is no concealing the mixture of fear and excitement as the momentous hour approaches.

No One Cares

Yet still the £18 million question remains unanswered.

Will Wossy tone down his anarchic, cutting-edge comedy? Will he be tamed by the killjoy Beeb bosses? Or will he do what he does best and ring up old men in the middle of the night to humiliate them?

Nobody Gives A F***

A BBC insider told us, "There is feverish speculation here as to what his first words will be when he is back on air. Will it be 'Hello' or 'Good Evening' or 'I've fucked your granddaughter'. We are entering uncharted territory now and there is no way of telling which way Wossy will jump."

Yesterday, however, the man himself was remaining tight-lipped. A message on the internet "Twitter" site gave nothing away. "P*** off, w**kers," it read.

Where will you be when you hear Ross back on air:

a) *In bed?*

b) *In pub?*

c) *On toilet?*

Send us your pix and win a £1 house from Asda.

MAN STILL HAS BEARD

A MAN was yesterday reported as "still having a beard". Said one beard expert, "The man definitely hasn't shaved it off yet. Despite speculation that the man would remove his beard, all the evidence suggests that the beard remains intact."

Eagle-eyed beard spotters recorded sightings of the beard on Christmas Day when the man left his house. And even as late as New Year's Day, the formerly beardless man was described as "definitely hirsute". *(Reuters)*

ON OTHER PAGES ■ Are beards the new razors? **2** ■ Win a beard in our New Year competition **3** ■ Beards to watch out for in 2009 **4**

OLD POLLY FILLER'S ALMANACK

That All-Purpose Humorous Prediction Piece In Full

So what does 2009 hold in store for credit crunch Britain? Well, here goes!

January

Cheryl Cole becomes Queen. And cries her eyes out when she gives a knighthood to Sir Jonathan Ross!!

February

Lewis Hamilton becomes the first black Prime Minister, beating David Cameron on the last lap of the General Election!!!

March

Gavin and Stacey become Joint Director General of the BBC. ITV is sold to Woolworths!!!

April

Boris Johnson wins Olympic Gold Cycling Medal. But is banned for having an affair with Queen Cheryl!!!

May

Ex-PM Gordon Brown wins Strictly Come Dancing, narrowly beating Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Llama – but only thanks to judges Kerry Katona, Christopher Biggins and Ed Stourton!!!

June

Jungle fun as Jeremy Clarkson marries both Ant and Dec in a Bush Tucker Trial and then has to buy Woolworths from ITV!!!

July

The BBC's Robert Peston is made Chancellor of the Exchequer as Britain dumps the pound and puts the face of Queen Cheryl on the 100 euro note!!!

August

Lord Simon of Cowell becomes President of the United States after Barack Obama is involved in a scandal with Jonathan Ross, Boris Johnson and Queen Cheryl!!!

September

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

October

????????????????????????

November

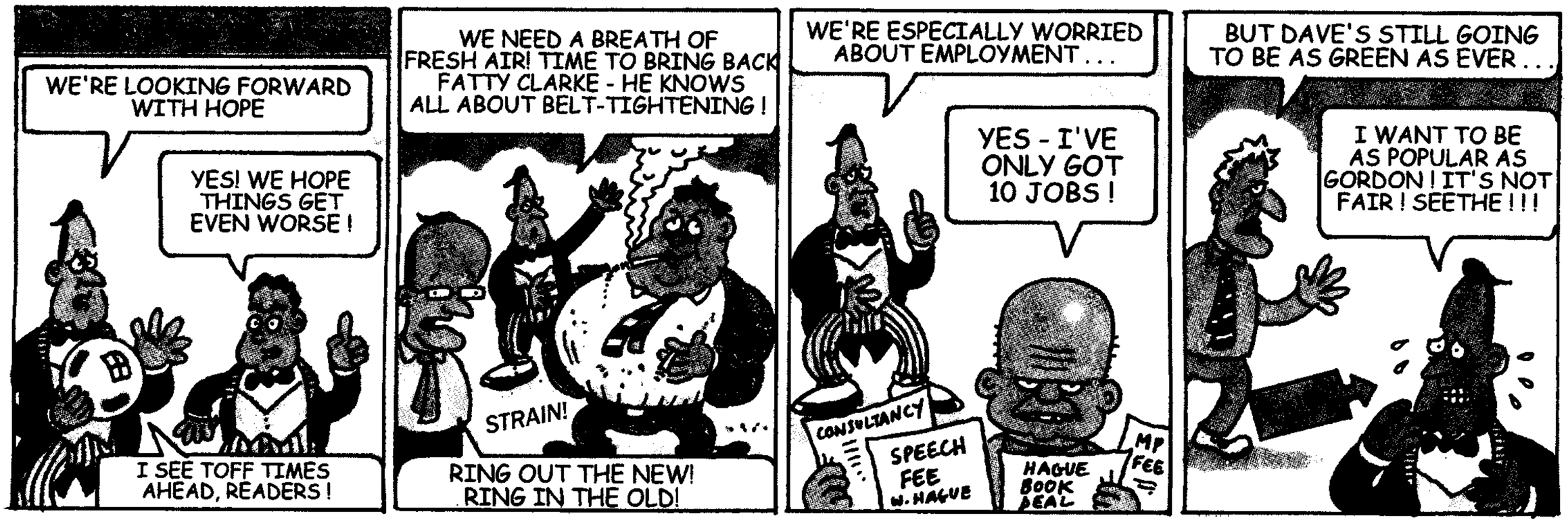
??????!!!!!!!!!!????????!!!!!!!!!!!!

December

Phew! I look back humorously at the highs and lows of 2009 before desperate editor asks me to look forward humorously to 2010 *(continued for ever)*

©Polly Filler, exclusive to all newspapers 2009.

Dave Snooty AND HIS PALS


WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD WITH HOPE
YES! WE HOPE THINGS GET EVEN WORSE!
I SEE TOFF TIMES AHEAD, READERS!
WE NEED A BREATH OF FRESH AIR! TIME TO BRING BACK FATTY CLARKE - HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT BELT-TIGHTENING!
STRAIN!
RING OUT THE NEW! RING IN THE OLD!
WE'RE ESPECIALLY WORRIED ABOUT EMPLOYMENT...
YES - I'VE ONLY GOT 10 JOBS!
CONSULTANCY
SPEECH FEE W. HAGUE
HAGUE BOOK DEAL
MP FEE
BUT DAVE'S STILL GOING TO BE AS GREEN AS EVER...
I WANT TO BE AS POPULAR AS GORDON! IT'S NOT FAIR! SEETHE!!!

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Harold Pinter O.M., dramatist

So. Farewell
Then Harold Pinter,
Famous playwright.

The Birthday Party,
The Homecoming,
No Man's Land –
These were your
Masterpieces.

But now you have
Gone to
No man's land.

There will be
No more birthday parties

And no
Homecoming.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

The Pinter I knew

by Everybody

TO THE world he may have appeared a curmudgeonly, difficult character, even rude.

Yet to those of us who knew him well Harold was the most delightful of companions, charming, witty, generous to a fault, and with an impish sense of humour.

I well remember one magical evening at his favourite restaurant, Les Trois Etoiles de Michelin, when he was introduced to my young niece, who had just returned from a holiday in America.

Harold turned to her and in his inimitable way told her to "Fuck off back to fucking America with all your warmongering Fascist friends".

His other great love was cricket, and I shall never forget *(cont. p.94.)*

Answers to Christmas Quiz

(cont. from p. 94)

74 *(a)* Commander Brian Paddick. Lord Mandelson of Hartlepool and Foy. Sir Ian McKellan. All the others are Lib Dems.

(b) Harold Wilson, A.N. Wilson, Colin Wilson, Sergeant Wilson from *Dad's Army*.

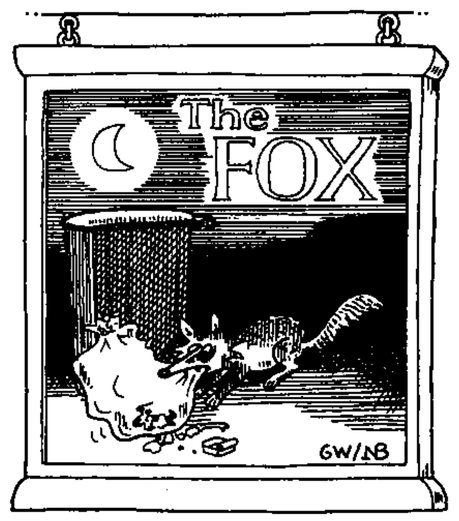
75 *(a)* 9/11
(b) 7/11
(c) 3/11½d
(d) 1134
(e) The 11.34 from Paddington
(f) 007

76 The man on the bicycle will arrive first. The man in the car will take exactly twice as long. The man in the aircraft will not arrive at all because he travelled with Ryanair.

77 *Veritabile Appallingensis* is the heraldic motto of the Prince of Wales.

78 "Good Afternoon Mrs Fothergill. I hope I'm not disturbing you" is the opening sentence of Melvyn Bragg's "Tea With Mrs Fothergill" (Cumbrian Press), 1979.

MODERN INN SIGNS



Telegraph Men Released

By Our Media Staff
M.T. Building

TWO senior Telegraph journalists emerged blinking from the Daily Telegraph yesterday, after an ordeal lasting several weeks in which they had no idea what their fate would be.

The men were kept waiting for a phone call which would at last tell them that they were free to look for alternative employment.

Said one of the men, "It was horrendous. We were kept in the dark and then forced to appear on the internet reading out rubbish. We were told to smile and look happy. But now our nightmare is over."

Fact File

The Telegraph is a little known right-wing group run by mysterious twin brothers based in a fortress in the Channel Island of Brellou. Their stated objective is to cut costs, sack employees and bring down their own newspaper.

TOP FOOTBALLER IN 'QUIET EVENING AT HOME' SHOCK

by Our Football Staff **LUNCHTIME O'BOOTS**

THE WORLD of soccer was rocked to its foundations last night when it was revealed that a top Premiership footballer had spent an evening quietly at home with his wife and family.

"I don't know what came over me," said England striker Steve Wayne. "I got back from the game, put the kids to bed and then had supper with my wife in front of the television. It was a moment of madness."

STEVIE BLUNDER

"I know I should have been out with the lads at a club until four in the morning, getting pissed and picking fights with people."

Said a repentant Steve, "I am having therapy to talk me through the issues that confront me at this difficult phase of my life.

"I realise that if I get addicted to this lifestyle it could destroy me as a professional footballer."

■What do you think they should do with Steve Wayne? Should he:

(a) be strung up?
(b) be made captain of England?
(c) Don't know.

Let us know at www.mailytelegraph.co.uk so we've got something to fill up our pages without having to pay any journalists because we've sacked them all.

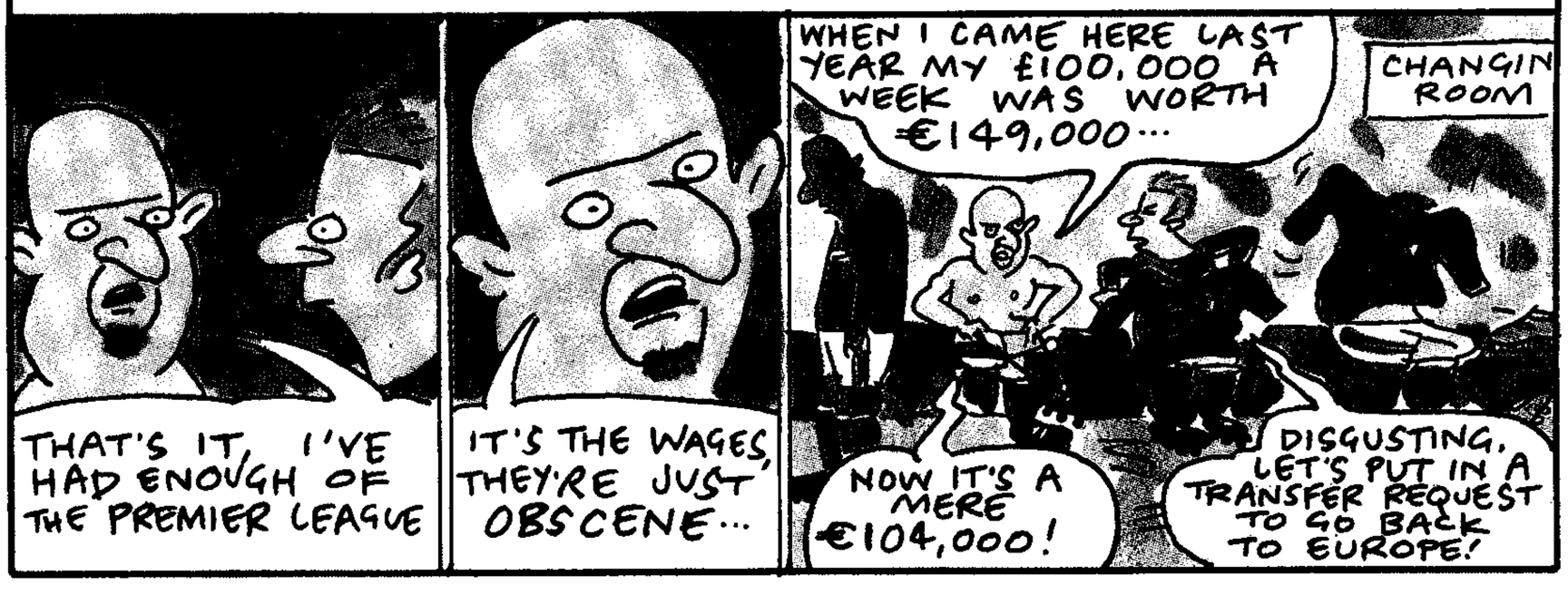
THOSE NEW TRAIN FARES IN FULL

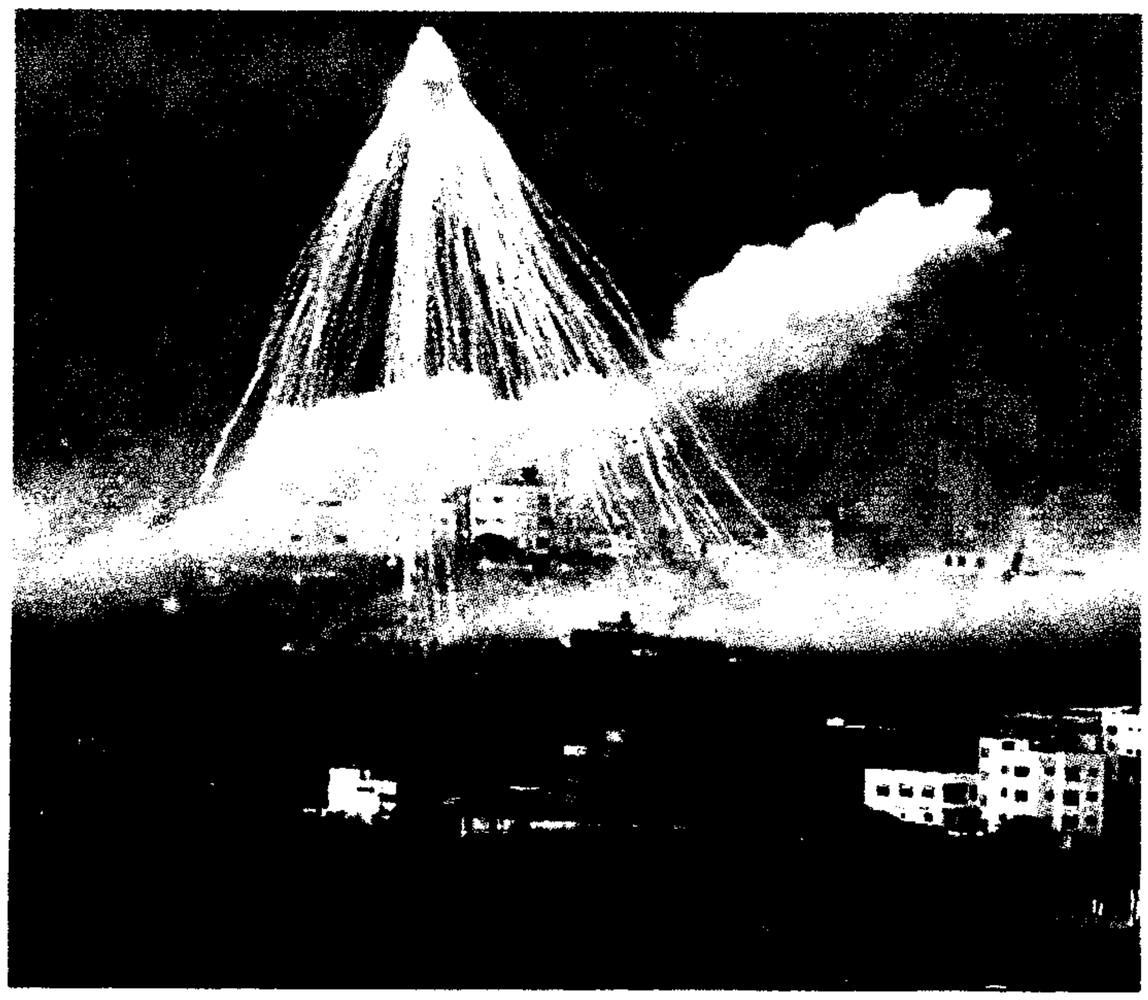
Season Ticket Off Peak
"How much?!"

Super-Saver Off Peak
"You've got a bloody cheek!"

Super-Saver Peak
"You've got to be f***ing joking!"

the PREMIERSH*TS


PAUL WOOD
THAT'S IT, I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THE PREMIER LEAGUE
IT'S THE WAGES, THEY'RE JUST OBSCENE...
WHEN I CAME HERE LAST YEAR MY £100,000 A WEEK WAS WORTH €149,000...
CHANGIN ROOM
NOW IT'S A MERE €104,000!
DISGUSTING. LET'S PUT IN A TRANSFER REQUEST TO GO BACK TO EUROPE!



'NEW YEAR FIREWORKS BIG SUCCESS,' SAY ORGANISERS

Dateline: 31st December

THIS YEAR's spectacular display of pyrotechnics which welcomed in the New Year over Gaza was "the best yet", said organisers.

Thousands came out of their houses in order to run away from the multi-million pound extravaganza put on for the benefit of Israeli voters *(Surely "Palestinians?" Ed.)*.

As phosphorous smoke lit up the night sky, there was general agreement that this year's display was the best since last year's and the one before that.

"It is something the Israelis do awfully well," said one bystander, Siddi Al-Bonkers. "Just look! Oooh! Aaaargh!"

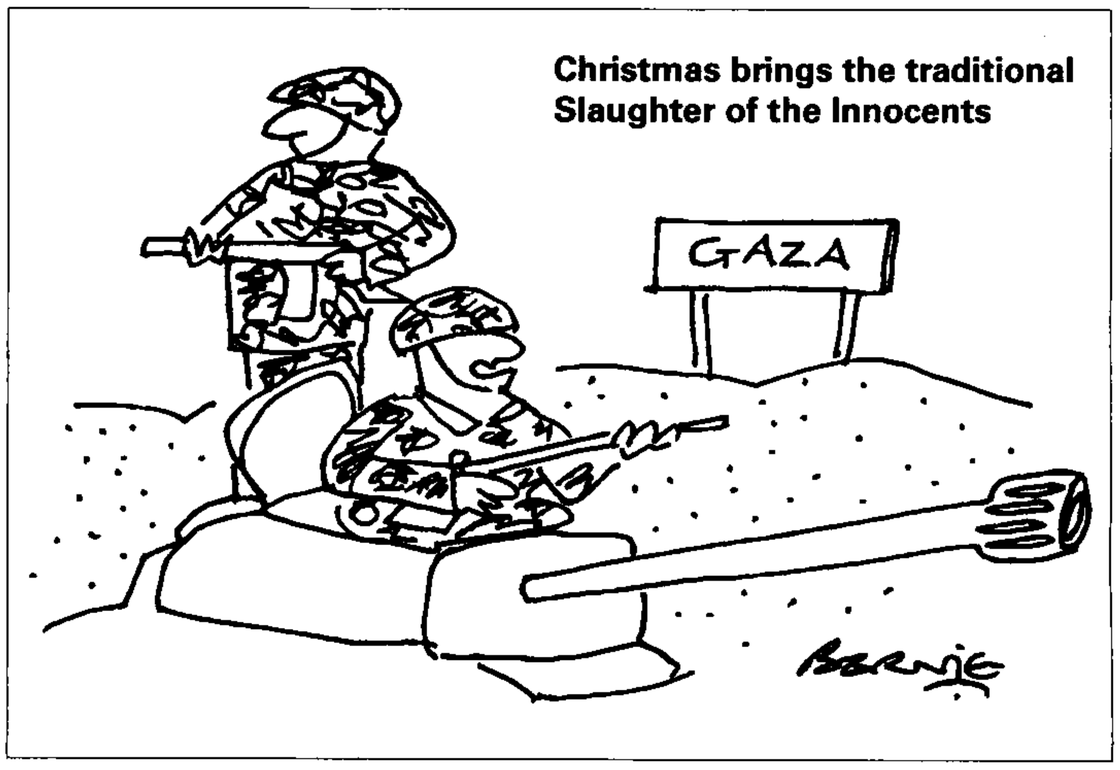
MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

'WHERE IS BLAIR?' asks nobody

by Our Man In Gaza **Chris Gunnfire**

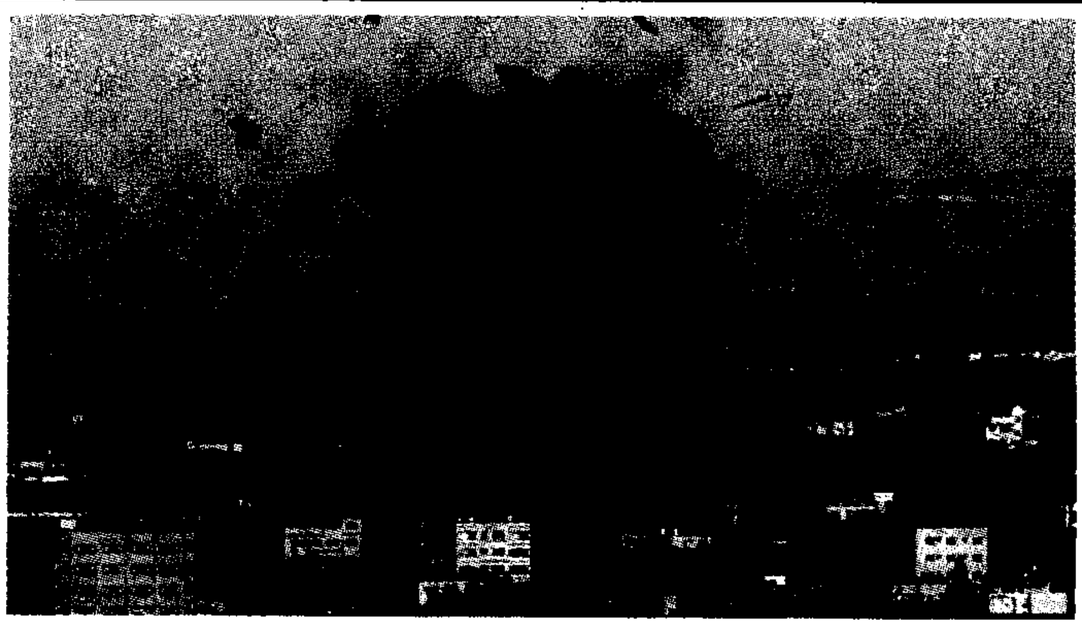
AS THE crisis in the Middle East escalated yesterday, one question was on nobody's lips. Where is the man who was going to bring peace to that troubled region through his intensive round of non-stop after dinner speeches in China, former prime minister Tony Blair?

Said one Palestinian spokesman, speaking from his pile of rubble, "We deeply appreciate all the work Tony is doing for his bank in New York, but we wonder whether he could spare just a couple of minutes *(cont. p. 94.)*



'SOMETHING IS HAPPENING'

by Our Man Not In Gaza MILES A. WAY



Israel, Monday

From where I am standing it is absolutely clear that something or other is going on just over the horizon in Gaza.

I can see quite clearly a pillar of smoke rising up into the sky, which is a sure sign that there has been some sort of bombardment, possibly with bombs – and either Hamas or the Israeli army are doing something over there.

Clueless In Gaza

I can't say exactly which targets are being hit or not because I am not being allowed to get anywhere near whatever it is that is happening.

However, from my vantage point here in the bar of the Tel Aviv Ramada Inn, I *can* say that the service is very slow and *(cont. p. 94)*

GAZA – OBAMA SPEAKS OUT

The Book of Ehud

Chapter 94

1. And, lo, it came to pass that the days were accomplished that the ceasefire should end between the children of Israel and the Hamas-ites, they that dwelt in the land of Gaza.
2. And thus, as was foretold, the Hamas-ites once again sent forth into the land of Israel many rockets that are called Qassam and Faj-3 and BM-21 Grad, even unto the cities of Askelon, Ashdod and Beersheba.
3. Then Ehud that is called Olmert waxed wroth, and summoned unto him Ehud that is called Barak, who waxed even wrother.
4. And he also called Tzipi, the daughter of Livni, who waxed even wrother still.
5. And they said among thmselves, "The hour is upon us. Now is the time for smiting, as we have done so many times before, to bring peace to the land of Israel."
6. And they wagged their heads wisely, saying, "Yea, as it worked before in the land of Lebanon, when we smote the Hezboll-ites, so it will worketh again.
7. "Furthermore," they muttereth privily. "there is an election coming up, and the children of Israel tendeth to choose the ones who do the most smiting."
8. And so it came to pass that, while the Gaza-ites were watching their televisions by night, behold, the skies were filled with a heavenly host raining bombs on them and singing "No peace on earth, ill will to men."
9. And, as the fire and brimstone decended on the Gaza-ites, they were slain in their hundreds, even men, women and children.
10. And in the streets of the city of Gaza there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth.
11. And Ehud cried aloud, saying, "Verily, that will teach you Hamas-ites to launch your rockets at the land of Israel."
12. And the Hamas-ites laughed him to scorn, and launched more rockets into the land of Israel where the people were also slain but not in quite the same numbers.
13. If thou wouldst not know the score, looketh away now.
14. Which is what most of the world did.
15. The score was as follows: Gaza-ites – 400; Israel-ites – 4.
16. Which is an good result.
17. And Ehud said, "Behold, this showeth that the smiting is working. Never again will we see the rockets of the Hamas-ites darkening the skies of Israel... hangeth on, what is that falling from the heavens... ?"
18. And as he spake there was an mighty boom, like unto the thunder that fills even the mighty Leviathan with dread as he slumbereth off the coast of Eilat (which currently offereth three weeks for the price of one, hurry, hurry, hurry, while Israel lasts).
19. Then, as the smoke cleareth, Ehud saith, "Right. That's done it. There is only one way to stop this kind of thing. More smiting!" And the children of Israel rejoiced, saying, "Too true, Ehud. For there be-eth only one language that these people of Gaza understandeth."
20. So Ehud sent forth a mighty army and tanks, even an hundredfold, to carry out the next round of smiting that would finally bring lasting peace to the land of Israel.
21. Just as it hath done so many times before.

(To be continued)

UN SAYS 'WORLD UNITED' OVER GAZA

by Our International Staff
Luke Theotherway

AFTER meeting in an emergency session, the UN has issued a communiqué saying that the world is united in its determination to do nothing in the face of Israel's continuing attack on Gaza.

"In past conflicts between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the region, there has been some wavering in the international community's commitment to looking the other way, but this time, they are united in their determination to ***(cont. p. 94)***

GAZA NEWS

NATIONWIDE OUTRAGE AT NEW YEAR ATROCITY

by Our Diplomatic Correspondent **Phil Pages**

NO ONE could believe it would happen again. But with a terrible inevitability the New Year once again ushered in the news that no one wanted to hear.

All-round veteran entertainer Bruce Forsyth had not been given a knighthood in the New Year's Honours List. All over Britain, the country was asking, "How could this be allowed to happen? Why didn't the government step in? Where was Tony Blair?"

Hammy Ass

A huge petition, with over one million signatures, was quickly drawn up and submitted to Downing Street urging immediate action to remedy the disaster.

Mass demonstrations outside Buckingham Palace threatened to turn nasty as furious protestors burned effigies of the hated Sir Nicholas McPherson, Permanent Secretary at the Treasury, who had been knighted whilst the more deserving Brucie had been cruelly ignored.

Said the United Nations spokesman, "The world must not sit back and watch this injustice continue. It is time for the major powers to step in and force Gordon Brown to sit down to talks with Brucie's people."

Representatives of Brucie issued a simple and moving statement to the world on behalf of Not Sir Bruce, "Knight to see me, to see me knight!"

Exclusive To All Papers

DEADLY SUPER-FLU GRIPS BRITAIN

THERE were scenes of unprecedented horror on the streets of Britain today as a deadly super-flu ravaged whole towns and cities, laying waste to great swathes of the population.

The provision for extra morgues in city centres was said to have been put in place after reports that in just one street in Bradford as many as fifteen residents were said to have "a bit of a sniffle", while hard-pressed doctors in Leeds reported a ten-fold increase in patients feeling "a bit under the weather", as the death toll from the deadly super-flu rose from zero to zero.

Up and down the country, millions of people were said to be feeling a bit poorly, in what has been described by all newspapers desperate for a scare story to sell a few papers over the holidays, as the most serious public health catastrophe since "the great runny nose outbreak of 1927" which cost almost no lives.

The World Health Organisation said they were predicting millions more people would contract the deadly super-flu in the weeks to come in the hope of skiving a few extra days off work after the Christmas holidays.

Mugabe Sends Sympathy

ZIMBABWE President Robert Mugabe said he was delighted to learn today that hospitals in Britain were said to be almost at breaking point as they treated thousands of patients who had contracted a super-flu bug which has swept the country.

"The panic there contrasts sharply with the situation here in Zimabwe, where we acted quickly and decisively to eradicate our recent outbreak of cholera by closing down all the hospitals and allowing all the sufferers to die.

"Britain's health service clearly can learn a lot from us."

A Doctor Writes **Australian Flu**

AS A doctor, I am often asked, "Should I go and see the new film *Australia*, starring Nicole Kidman?"

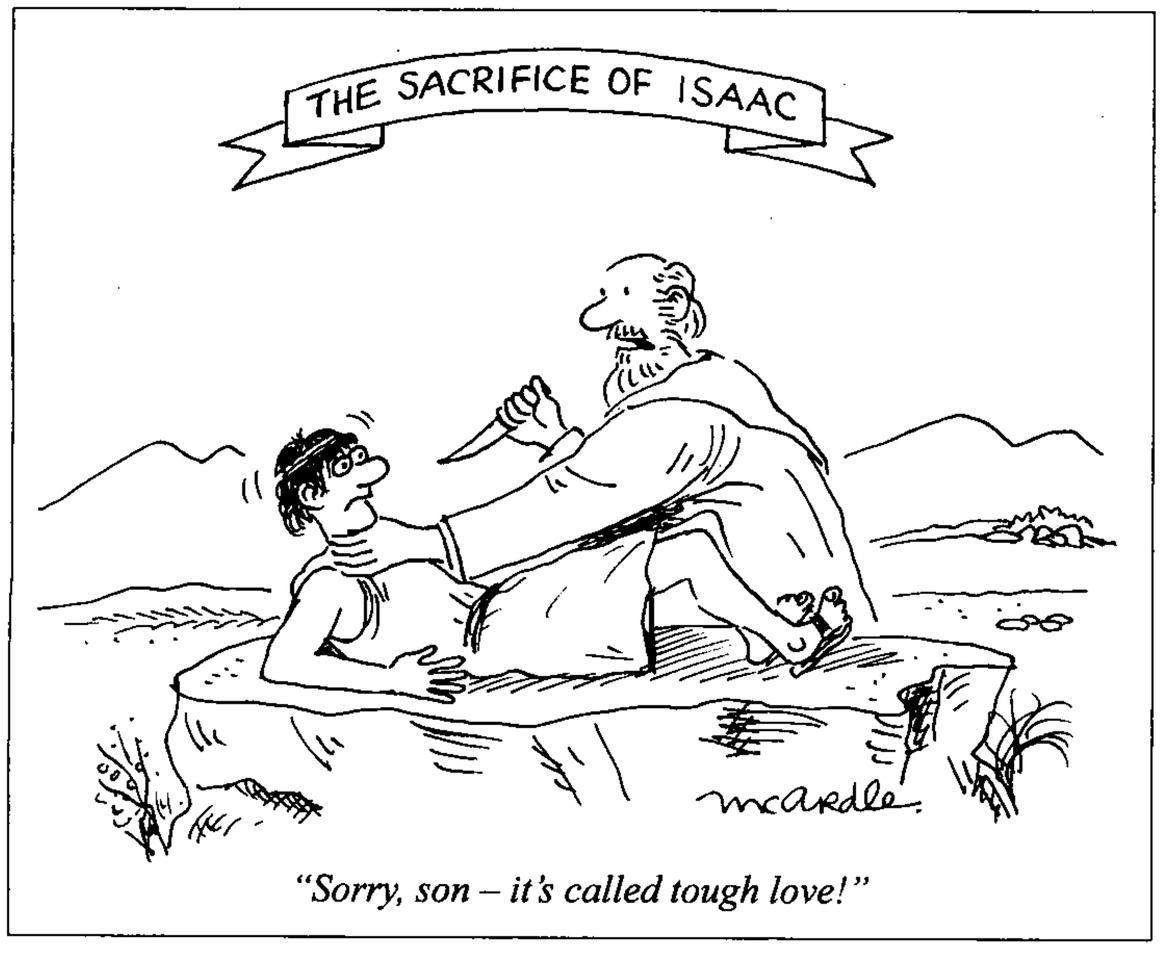
The simple answer is no. What happens is that the cinemagoer is rapidly overcome by feelings of boredom which can then turn into headache, drowsiness or even nausea.

Australian Flu (or *Bazluhrmannitis australiensis normalis* to give it the full medical name) is highly contagious and is coming to a cinema near you.

If you are worried about Australian Flu you should stay indoors and watch television.

© A. Doctor.

TOMORROW: Oscar's Syndrome (Winsletitis nudensis naziitis)



"Sorry, son – it's called tough love!"

Daily Mail
FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2009

ROSS IN NEW BBC SHAME

by Our Entire Staff
Paul Dacresofthisstuff

THE disgraced BBC presenter, Jonathan Ross, sank to a new low today when he openly cycled on his bike from one place to another.

Showing no shame or remorse for the unspeakable hurt he had caused an innocent pensioner and his grand-daughter, Ross callously and smugly peddled down the street – without even an apology. Instead, he refused to smile at waiting photographers outside his home, despite being paid £800 million a day.

When contacted, the BBC Director General refused to condemn Ross's unforgivable cycle-riding antics, which plunged the BBC into a new licence fee crisis and caused a further 15% drop in house prices which *(cont. p. 94)*

That New Year's Honours List In Full

Sophie Cadwallender, 25. Paralympic Bronze Medal, Beach Snooker, MBE (Services to Sport)

Winston Beard, 37. Jazz alto trombonist and composer. Founder of The Bearded Warriors, CBE (Services to Beards)

Jenny Jeninski, 53. Former head of 360° Multi-Platform Vision Content (Radio). She becomes Dame of the British Empire (Services to Services)

Man on the Telly, 46. Star of TV's *The Programme on the Telly* (Services to being on the telly)

Sir Christopher Ccredit-Ccrunch, 52, Treasury Under-Secretary for Toxic Loans. Knight Bachelor of the Bath (Services to the Recession)

Sir Ledwell Zeppelin, 87. Lead singer of popular rock and roll band V2. (Services to the Pharmaceutical Industry) *(That's enough. Ed)*

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam
Ed Stourton,
Radio presenter

So. Hullo
Again Ed Stourton.

You are back
On Radio Four.

Here today
Gone tomorrow.

But back again
On *Today* tomorrow!

As you can see,
I am in a festive mood.

E.J. Thribb (17½ cans of lager)

Letter to the Editor
Names of the year

From the Rev. A. Cyclone-Nargis.

Sir, As usual at this time of year, I have compiled a list of the most popular names of 2008, as recorded in your Birth's column. They are as follows:

Boys	Girls
1. Barack	Carla
2. Libor	Hillary
3. Gaza	Australia
4. Fabio	Mammamia
5. Boris	Fern
6. Mosley	Britney
7. Trig	Cheryl
8. Ross	Keira
9. Russell	Deripaska
10. Baby P. Worsthorne	Baroness Scotland

THE REV. A. CYCLONE-NARGIS, The Old Storm Shelter, 1 Burma Road, Mandalay, Beds.

6 TO WATCH IN 2009

The Eye's Guide To The Top Talents Who Will Be Making Waves In The Next 12 Months

MEDIA

Actor **Camilla Starborgling**, 19, is tipped for stardom when the BBC shows its eagerly-anticipated dramatisation of Mrs Gaskell's *East Is West*, in which Camilla plays Constance, the youngest daughter of rich mill-owner Sir Ebenezer Pilbeam (Tom Courtney).

CITY

Nick Starborgling, 32, whizz-kid CEO of high-flying St James's-based hedge fund The Icarus Group. Starborgling is confident that he can ride out the recession by borrowing money from his father.

MUSIC

Marvin Fuzz (real name Justin Starborgling), 22, is the lead singer of the Borgs, the new Indie Thrash Metal band that is hotly tipped to take this year's Reading Festival by storm. The Borgs met at Marlborough School, and Marvin's fellow-members include lead guitarist Sam Hate (Archie Starborgling) and keyboard Daddy Weed, (Marvin's cousin Wemyss Starborgling).

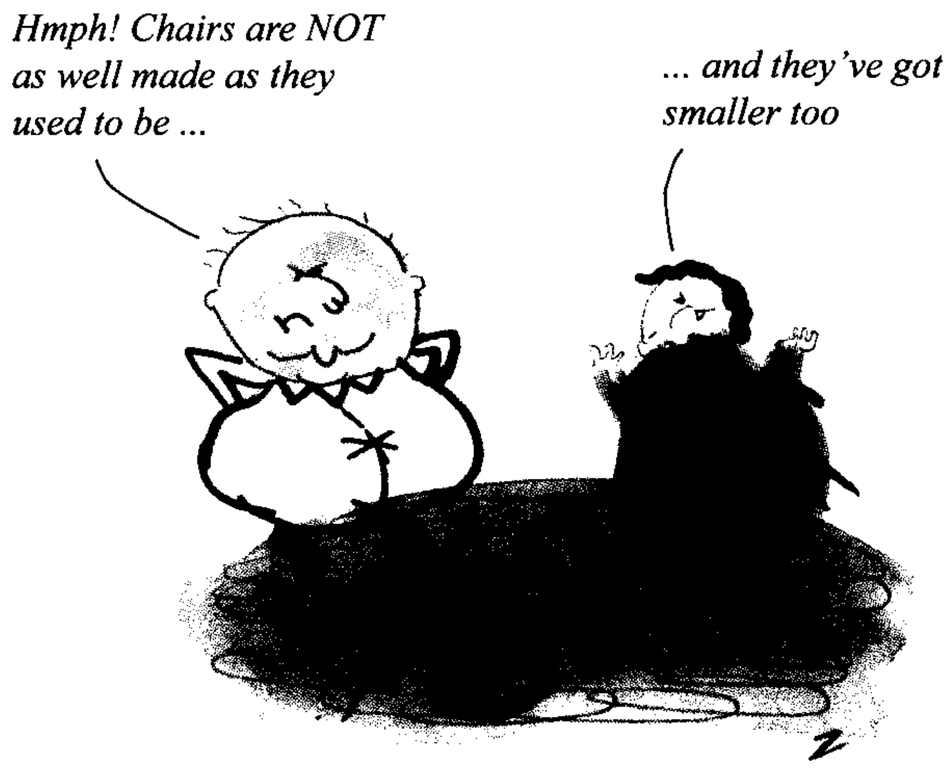
FASHION

Roddy Starborgling, 23, a graduate of the Croydon College of Fashion, has set the London design scene ablaze with Starby's, his new shop in Lower Sloane Street. Roddy says, "Once I find some clothes to put in my shop, there'll be no stopping me."

LITERATURE

Chloe Starborgling, 24, this spring publishes her first novel *Family Secrets*, the story of a large upper-class family whose younger members break away from the stuffy traditional mould. One becomes an actress, another a hedge-fund manager, a third a pop singer, a fourth a fashion designer and a fifth aspires to be a best-selling novelist. Bloomsbury are said to be 'over the moon' at her debut, describing her as 'the new Zoe Heller'.

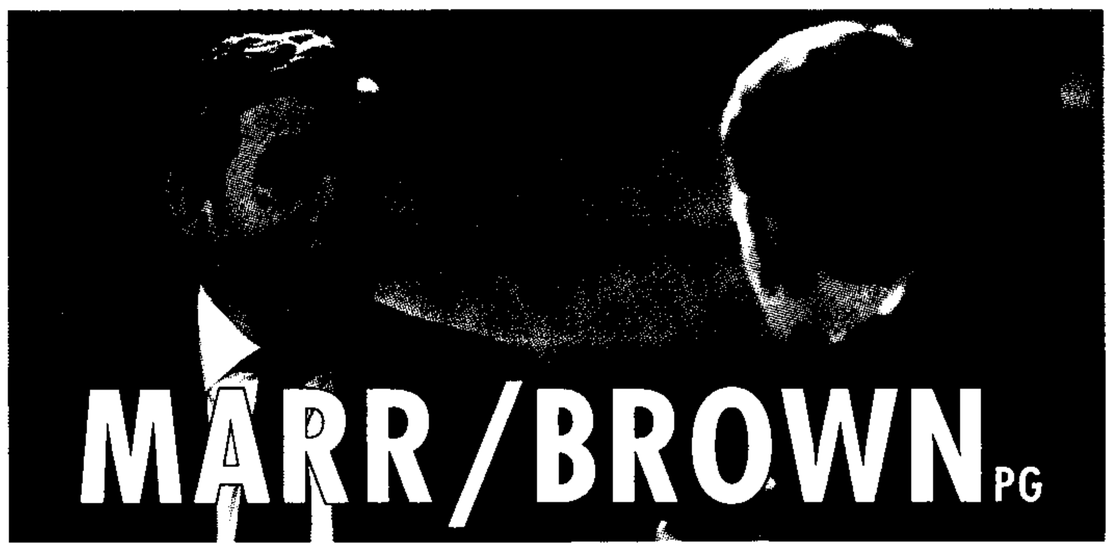
***Six To Watch** was compiled by Christopher Starborgling, with additional research by Miranda Starborgling.*



How the Government new anti-obesity ads hope to get kids exercising more

- ★ Anti-obesity ad comes on the telly
- ★ Overweight twelve-year-old on sofa puts down crisps, picks up remote and changes the channel
- ★ Er...
- ★ That's it.

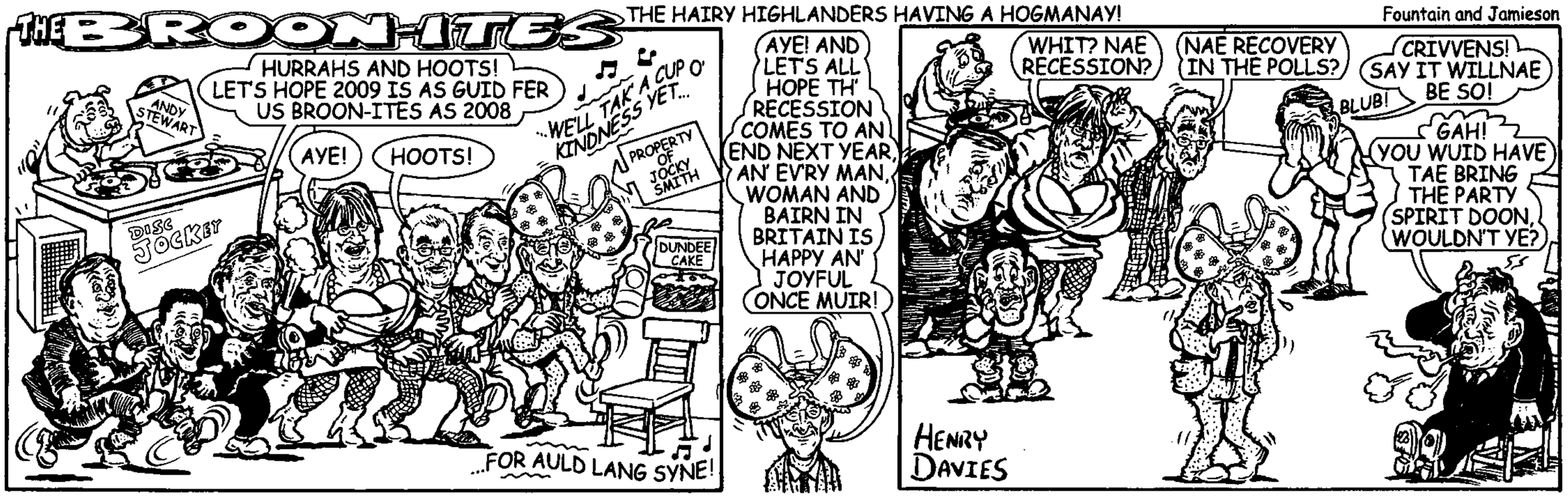
Advertisement



The historic interview that gripped the whole world

Epic encounter in which media hot-shot Andrew Marr ruthlessly sucks up to the old discredited leader Gordon Brown finally getting him to confess to nothing at all.
Don't miss the incredible scene where Marr pushes Brown to admit that he is absolutely brilliant and has saved the world from financial disaster.

NOW SHOWING AT THE FOLLOWING GNOMEONS
● Rusbridger Green ● Mulholland North ● Hutton Park ● Keegan West


THE BROON-ITES
THE HAIRY HIGHLANDERS HAVING A HOGMANAY!
Fountain and Jamieson
ANDY STEWART
HURRAHS AND HOOTS! LET'S HOPE 2009 IS AS GUID FER US BROON-ITES AS 2008
AYE!
HOOTS!
...WE'LL TAK' A CUP O' KINDNESS YET...
PROPERTY OF JOCKY SMITH
DISC JOCKEY
DUNDEE CAKE
...FOR AULD LANG SYNE!
AYE! AND LET'S ALL HOPE TH' RECESSION COMES TO AN END NEXT YEAR, AN' EV'RY MAN, WOMAN AND BAIRN IN BRITAIN IS HAPPY AN' JOYFUL ONCE MUIR!
WHIT? NAE RECESSION?
NAE RECOVERY IN THE POLLS?
BLUB!
CRIVVENS! SAY IT WILLNAE BE SO!
GAH! YOU WUID HAVE TAE BRING THE PARTY SPIRIT DOON, WOULDN'T YE?
HENRY DAVIES

DIARY

DIANA MOSLEY'S A-Z OF FUN AND LAUGHTER

Acton, Harold: For me, no man was ever less like the area of a city associated with his name. Yet for Harold Acton, to be linked with this most unprepossessing part of suburban West London was, I fear, a matter of perpetual ignominy.

Black Shirts: What could be more fun than donning lovely black shirts and then marching with one's head held high through the less, shall we say, "British" areas of the East End?! Whenever my dear husband, Oswald, pursued this passion of his, he and his followers would be greeted by screams of laughter. Or, at any rate, screams. Why quibble? It's so dreadfully small-minded and *spiteful*.

Churchill, Winston: Mr Churchill, as I shall continue to insist upon calling him (since no true patriot ever deemed him deserving of that ill-begotten knighthood) had precious little sense of fun. Otherwise, why on earth would he have pursued his futile little war against the reborn Germany, with its delightful sense of humour and sparkling *get-up-and-go*?

Death Camps: Heaven knows why they were called that when, by all accounts, they were perfectly snug, despite what the busy-bodies may tell us. A lot of nonsense has been written about them. Agreed, they might not have suited people like you or me, and a certain number of unfortunate things may well have come about but, then, they weren't created for us, were they, so who are we to judge? More tea?

Edward VIII: He had an impish sense of fun, and would have made a much better King than his dull old plodder of a brother, who proved so po-faced towards the Fuhrer.

Goebbels, Dr: Josef had a wicked sense of humour. Those who claim he had none are simply showing how spiteful they are. Although he was extremely busy supervising the tremendously impressive economic revival of Germany, he always found time to make one simply HOOT with laughter. For this, I shall always be grateful. By no stretch of the imagination could he be called po-faced.

In addition, Josef was clever, good company, and very well-read. Alas, the pressure of his life got too much for him in the end, and he felt obliged to take his own life, and those of his beloved children. But I feel sure he and his stalwart little wife Magda took the trouble to tell them all a splendid joke before slipping those cyanide pills into their well-brought-up little mouths. Perhaps he told them they were tasty boiled sweets! Josef adored what we used to call a leg-pull!

Hula-Hoop: Magda Goebbels was the master of the Hula-Hoop. Such was the force of her personality that she succeeded in persuading my late husband, Oswald Mosley, to form a crack Hula-Hoop division of his highly-regarded Blackshirts. The division consisted of decent, red-blooded Englishmen proud to proclaim their love of country by marching in formation whilst spinning Hula-Hoops around their waists. Needless to say, that tubby dwarf Churchill loathed the Hula-Hoop, and saw to it that it was the first victim of his absurd rationing.

Italians: I don't know about his war record, and it doesn't particularly interest me, but Benito Mussolini had the most wonderful sense of fun.

Jack the Ripper: Why do people go on so about Jack? As a child, one was taught that if one had nothing nice to say, then best say nothing at all. This is a rule that now seems to be disregarded. Most, if not all, of Jack's most severe critics never even knew him personally, as I did. Yet their insufferable ignorance seems only to spur them on to greater heights of sheer malice. How one wishes they would simply "shut up"!

Jack was hugely amusing, a brilliant talker with a clever wit, as well as the exquisite courtesy towards women which characterised him all his life. Needless to say, these attributes are never mentioned. Instead, his small-minded critics concentrate their efforts entirely on what one might call his "one little weakness". Oh, the ghastly suburban boredom of these blinkered dullards!

Knock-Knock: The Fuhrer simply *adored* "Knock-Knock" jokes. Why, one wonders, are our modish contemporary historians so determined to ignore his coltish wit and love of word-play? Instead, they serve us up with the usual tiresome stream of disobliging references to his so-called "love of power" and "anti-semitism". Little do they seem to realise that he was in fact a terrific supporter of the Jews.

Mickey Mouse: Dear darling Michael was a brilliant talker, whose idiosyncratic voice, with American inflections, amused the listener greatly, and whose characteristic ears never overshadowed his natural wit.

Pogo Sticks: My late husband, Sir Oswald, used to insist that his followers ride about on Pogo Sticks. A great visionary, he saw them as the transport of the future. And so they would have been too, but for Winston.

Quisling, Vidkun: His name is synonymous with fun.

Swastikas: Awfully pretty in the right places.

Umbrellas: Tremendous fun for spearing unpatriotic money-lenders with when they make a hoo-hah.

V for Victory: Winston's wretched gesture proved desperately tiresome and overworked. Small wonder the poor National Socialists grew irritated. Where was his sense of humour?

Windsor, Duchess of: I was fond of the Duchess of Windsor, and very much admired her wonderful efficiency, her delicious food and her unfailing high spirits. She was one of the most outstanding hostesses I ever knew. She possessed a unique talent for making everything fun, and wore her clothes so well and chose them so cleverly, always making sure, for example, that any *haut couture* dress in which she invested possessed one hole for the neck and a further two holes, one for each arm. Nobody more appreciated fun than the Duchess did.

Xylophone: Name me one Jew who ever played the xylophone well, or even half-well. You see!

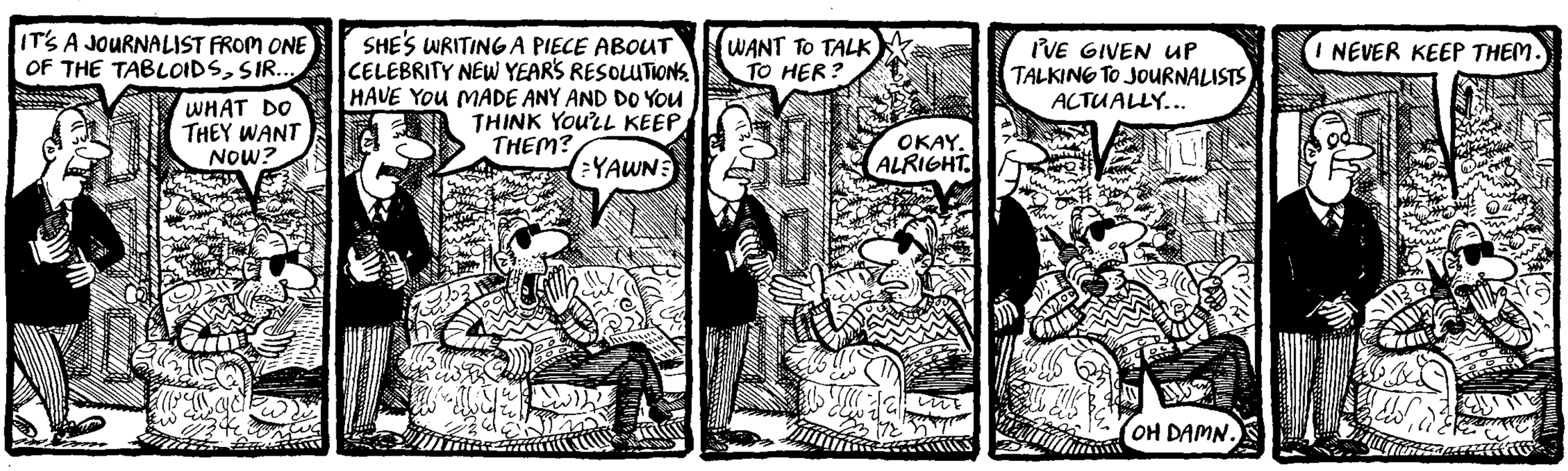
Yo-Yo: So very tiresome, the habit it has of, when you throw it away, always insisting upon coming back.

Zulus: My husband, Oswald Mosley, was a great believer in the Zulu. From the mid-1920s on, he campaigned without cease for the Zulu to be admitted to White's Club, with reciprocal rights to The Beefsteak. But – typically! he was blocked at every turn by that jealous pygmy Winston.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER


IT'S A JOURNALIST FROM ONE OF THE TABLOIDS, SIR...
WHAT DO THEY WANT NOW?
SHE'S WRITING A PIECE ABOUT CELEBRITY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS. HAVE YOU MADE ANY AND DO YOU THINK YOU'LL KEEP THEM?
YAWN
WANT TO TALK TO HER?
OKAY. ALRIGHT.
I'VE GIVEN UP TALKING TO JOURNALISTS ACTUALLY...
OH DAMN.
I NEVER KEEP THEM.

Literary Review

Jay talking

The Last Bachelor
Jay McInerney
(Bloomsbury, £12.99)

IT'S a good quarter of a century since Jay McInerney first raised his head from the water, climbed purposefully up the ship's ladder and settled down to sunbathe on the upper deck of SS Modern American Fiction as old Admiral Mailer peered rheumily down from the bridge. Not much has changed.

A whole lot older since those halcyon days when Michael J. Fox portrayed him in *Bright Lights, Big City*, the entity known as McInerney-man isn't necessarily a great deal wiser. Still dealing out fragments of creative wisdom to those NYU writing classes, still "running his little funds", Manhattan's finest continues to roll out glistening lines of Bolivian boo while sedulously committing adultery with anything that moves in a variety of up-market tourist destinations. "One afternoon in the cool, musty interior of a Romanesque church near Saint Paul de Vence, Eva knelt on the stone floor and gave him a blow job" runs an arresting sentence from the title story – sex, religion and Badaeker, and as McInerneyesque a line as our man ever wrote.

What is McInerney-man up to these days? Well, he still hangs out in fashionable Noo Yawk, although there are ancestral connections tugging him south and north east. The old Catholic upbringing finds him sashaying into a church every so often, to the amusement of sophisticated chums from the Soho lofts and the TriBeCa rumpus rooms.

On the margin of his self-absorbed yet faintly exhausted shadow lurks McInerney woman who, against some pretty stiff competition, turns out to be almost as awful as he is. In "Penelope on the Pond" she's a "media consultant" who's shagging some presidential wannabe and trying to avoid the press. In "Summary Judgment" she's a gold-digging harpy with her eye on newly-divorced Mr Right. In "Everything is Lost" she's a journalist shacked up with a one-book writer whose career is on the skids. 9/11 has imparted a vaguely sobering gloss to these chronicles of aiming and blaming, false hearts and fresh starts, but the moral lessons learned are as clunking as the dialogue, and the serial fornication goes on much as before. That dialogue! No one does dialogue like McInerney man and woman. "Seth's a writer." Well, how could he not be? "I thought that piece you did for *Black Book* was really insightful. The one about the new chick lit."

It will perhaps have become evident by now that McInerney-man bears a distinct resemblance to one of our home-grown fictional archetypes: Hanif Kureishi-man. Yep, Jay's endless projections of himself have exactly the same lickerish eye, exactly the same tribe of well-connected friends from media-land, exactly the same determination to please themselves whatever the moral cost.

As with Kureishi, it's their utter tediousness as people that undermines any procedural conviction. So consistently unlovely and self-obsessed are McInerney's characters that the reader never roots for them or bothers whether they succeed or fail. Who cares if Alysha the dodgy contessa in "Summary Judgment" bags Billy her Denver tycoon? They clearly deserve each other. As for Sabrina and Kyle in "Everything is Lost", he's a flake and she's deluding herself, so why turn the page?

Just occasionally – in perhaps two of the dozen pieces collected here – something stirs. "The Madonna of the Turkey Season" is a devious little tale about a family laid low by the play that one of the brothers writes about his mother's death, thereby turning each Thanksgiving dinner into a bout of vengeful score-settling. Even here, though, the rapt, exclusive scent that turns much of McInerney's work into a top-of-the-range style guide wafts off the page like woodsmoke. "We would arrive Tuesday nights from prep school or college, or on Wednesday nights from New York, where we were working at a bank while writing a play…"

There is a rather significant line in the title-story (patrician fortysomething playboy finally brought to the altar) where the female *raisonneur*, glimpsing her old sweetheart "A.G." on the beach chatting up her niece, reflects that "She could read, even from this distance, the old sense of entitlement…" A similar sense of entitlement hangs over *The Lost Bachelor*, the thought that it's somehow OK for high-profile Yankee novelists whose reputations were made at about the time of Reagan's second term to go on peddling this stuff merely because they know no other tricks. Ominously, Bloomsbury is still using that ancient *Sunday Telegraph* quote about McInerney being "the type of American novelist to whom English readers instinctively warm". But this may not actually be a compliment.

Antony Beevor's *Stalingrad*

LIBRARY NEWS

■ DID bosses of the Caird Library at the National Maritime Museum simply forget that the documents they look after are actually used by researchers, when they decided to shut down completely during building works?

A £35m refurbishment to the Greenwich site, supported by shipping magnate Sammy Ofer, should bring long-term improvements to the museum's storage and library services. "We are pleased that the building work will begin earlier than initially planned," announced archive head Eleanor Gawne in the library's blog back in October. "Because of the revised schedule, the Caird Library will close to all our users on Saturday 20 December 2008. The Library will reopen in late spring/early summer 2009."

The short notice that many of the nation's unique historical documents were going to be in inaccessible storage for half a year left many researchers – some working to academic or publishing deadlines – stymied. Following many complaints, museum bosses have now backtracked slightly, admitting that they "underestimated the ongoing demand for access to these collections during the construction programme". A reading room will remain open with limited hours and the rare books and public records will remain accessible, although from March until June, manuscripts being packed and taken into storage will not be available.

The limited opening hours (20 hours a week, Tuesday to Thursday and one Saturday a month) will however continue until the grand opening of the Sammy Ofer Wing in 2012, just in time to show off to, er, the Olympic equestrians due to descend on Greenwich Park.

Books & Bookmen

■ IN THE summer of 2007 one Murray McDonald wrote a gloriously Spartist pamphlet titled *50,000 Editions of the Imperialist, Warmongering, Hate-Filled Guardian Newspaper*.

A few copies were sent to the radical London bookshop Housmans, near King's Cross station, where they spent the next 18 months languishing in a dusty box of assorted slow-selling odds and ends. Then, all of a sudden, shortly before Christmas, someone came in and bought the lot.

The customer turned out to be from the *Grauniad*, which has just moved into a new office up the road. Two other *Guardian* people came in asking for copies soon afterwards. Housmans staff, despite their radical credentials, are not entirely without business acumen. They tracked down the original supplier and asked for a rush order, thinking they were on to a rare money-spinner.

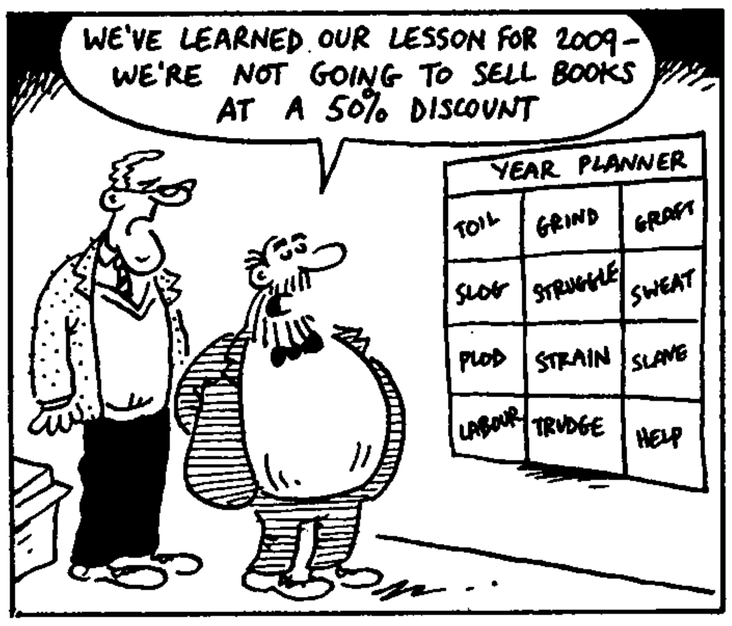
'Bookworm'

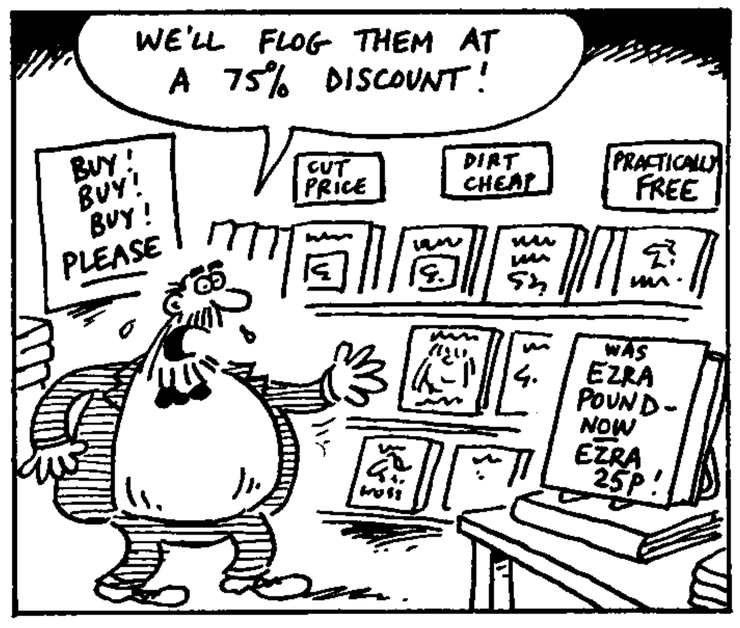
NUMBER CRUNCHING

1 Positive reviews ever featured in *Private Eye*'s Literary Review pages (for Paul O'Grady's *At My Mother's Knee* in *Eye* 1225)

1 Position of Paul O'Grady's *At My Mother's Knee* in the hardback non-fiction bestseller list for the whole of 2008

(He's still fired – Ed.)





Pseuds Corner

Having famously rhymed 'al fresco' with 'Tesco', [Lily Allen] offers, in a new track about God, the following couplet: 'Do you think He's ever been suicidal?/His favourite band is Creedence Clearwater Revival.' Only in England could such a line be written or, indeed, relished.

MATTHEW d'ANCONA – Spectator

Now, the economic bubble has burst in Ireland and [Roy] Keane seems fallible. At that, every Irish person is unnerved. Everyone projects dreams and meaning into the celebrities and sports stars we admire. But with Keane it was even more profound – an entire country obsessed about him, and a nation's psyche, all its pride and enterprise, seemed to reside in him. He is us. We are him. As he goes, so do we. The Celtic Tiger is tamed.

JOHN DOYLE – *New York Times*

The conceptual work at Te Tuhi was by the provocative Julian Dashper, who drew two pencil lines on a wall to critique the idea of permanence in artwork.

New Zealand Herald

I don't want to be known for one thing. I don't want to have an adjective based around my name. 'Lynchian', I know what that is. I know what 'Kubrickian' is, and I know what 'Bergmanesesque' means. But there isn't going to be – and I don't want there to be – a 'Mendesian.'

SAM MENDES – *Observer*

Yet Oasis wielded a supernatural power that fripperies of the physical realm could never hope to blunt.

DANIEL MARTIN – *thelondonpaper*

My favourite Christmas ritual every year is getting to the top of the Kleines Matterhorn in Switzerland before 10.30am, provided the temperature is above minus 20C and the wind below 20km/h, and skiing down to the resort of Cervinia. Then there is the calculated risk one takes about how long to spend in Cervinia before catching the last cable-car to the Monte Rosa glacier. After dipping into my pocket edition of Hamlet, while watching the sun go down in the little café at the top, I hurl myself down the 15km slopes to Zermatt in time for a late tea.

PROFESSOR ROBERT WINSTON – *The Times*

Dotted around the house are groupings of their favourite things. A flotilla of wooden boats hug the upstairs landing, a series of giant wooden mallets, like chess pieces, march up the eccentrically uneven stairs, oil cans line the kitchen window ledges, and framed over the bathtub are a year's worth of nail clippings and two plaited pigtails from Grey Rabbit, Puett and Peabody's eight year-old son.

At home with the former New York fashion designer J. MORGAN PUETT in her Pennsylvanian artists' colony,
Telegraph Magazine

CONTRIBUTORS: Matthew Wilson, Eamann Ó hÉigeartaigh, Philip Gabriel, Mary Keady, John Shepperd, Richard Potter, Chris Carter.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

CLEVELAND POLICE

Hook line a stinker

AFTER serving three years of a life sentence for murdering toddler Kyle Fisher, Suzanne Holdsworth was found not guilty at a retrial on 18 December and freed from jail in time to enjoy her first Christmas at home with her partner and daughters since 2004.

Holdsworth was babysitting Kyle in July 2004 when, according to her account, the two-year-old suddenly "went floppy" and collapsed while they watched TV at her house in Hartlepool. He died two days later.

Cleveland police decided the babysitter must have smashed his head against a banister. She was convicted in March 2005; but in May 2008 the appeal court ruled her conviction unsafe because new medical evidence suggested Kyle might have had an epileptic seizure. At her pre-Christmas retrial, the jury voted unanimously for acquittal.

After Holdsworth's original conviction, Cleveland police congratulated themselves in their annual report. But is Inspector Knacker now troubled by his role in sending an innocent woman to jail? Apparently not. Cleveland police say it was "a thorough, diligent and professional investigation" and Chief Constable Sean Price has already dismissed Holdsworth's request for an apology. "I can't criticise my officers for doing their job," he says.

If this is what Price regards as "doing their job", no wonder his force has such a terrible reputation.

In March 2003, more than a year before he "went floppy" at Suzanne Holdsworth's home, Kyle – a child who already had major genetic brain abnormalities – had suffered an accident while in the care of his mother, Clare Fisher. That accident, never properly investigated, holed Kyle's eye socket and pierced his brain. Cleveland police did not take statements from brain surgeon Sid Marks or face surgeon Professor Brian Avery, who were going to operate on the damage – even though such a brain injury can cause fits, and fits can kill. The old injury, and Kyle's four other brain abnormalities, were all missed as possible causes of death by Cleveland police's "relentless investigation".

In the case of the murder that didn't happen, Cleveland police also concede that they did not find anything on the alleged murder weapon, a banister at Suzanne's home, and nor did they do a DNA test on it.

In his *Newsnight* film on the case last week, John Sweeney drew attention to a disputed phone call between brain surgeon Marks and Detective Constable Kenneth Hook, who was told to examine the medical records in relation to doubts about the eye injury. Hook logged a call to Marks in which the two men allegedly discussed the old eye injury. Sid Marks says he has no recollection of any such call and is certain no statement was made by him or Professor Avery, not least because they're not in the habit of discussing the death of patients over the phone with strangers.

Marks is a respected neuro-surgeon. Hook, by contrast, isn't exactly Sherlock Holmes. In 1998 he gave his car keys to an acquaintance, convicted criminal Darren McGee, so that McGee could sell Hook's car. Instead McGee used it to hide £54,000 of cannabis resin in the boot. McGee and another man, Leslie Sharp, were jailed the following year for cannabis possession with intention to supply. Both men have since been killed in separate car crashes.

McGee's brother, Kevin, was amazed by Hook's behaviour. "Very naïve for a police officer," he said, "for anybody to give Darren a car, never mind a police officer." Would Kevin have lent his brother a car? "Definitely not." Yet Cleveland police say Hook was not disciplined for lending the car to a drug-dealer who had also been convicted in 1991 for handling stolen car parts.

There's no suggestion of corruption in Hook's association with McGee, but it does raise questions about the intelligence and perceptiveness of this gormless rozzer. "Thorough, diligent and professional"? Pull the other one, Knacker!

THE RACHEL NICKELL CASE

Brittle Britton

AFTER Robert Napper, the paranoid schizophrenic serving life in Broadmoor for murdering Samantha Bisset and her child, pleaded guilty at the end of last year to the murder of Rachel Nickell, who should shamelessly pop up on the BBC immediately afterwards claiming he had always linked the two murders?

None other than Paul Britton (pictured), the forensic psychologist who was castigated by an Old Bailey judge for being the man who "pulled the strings" behind the bungled police and media pursuit of Colin Stagg.

Britton claimed he had told police back in November 2003, when Samantha and her daughter Jasmine were murdered, that the same person was also responsible for killing Rachel. But Stagg was already in custody for Rachel's murder at that time and thus could not possibly have killed Samantha. So did Britton report that rather serious complication at Stagg's subsequent committal for trial in January 2004? Not a hint. Under oath and cross-examination he said: "There is not another case of a young woman murdered in broad daylight with a child which matches this precisely."

Not only did Britton not feel fit to volunteer the fact that he thought there were similarities in the murders, but also if he had told police (and they deny he had) then at the very least it should have been disclosed to Stagg's defence team. Either way, according to Jim Sturman, Stagg's QC, it is "utterly disgraceful that if Britton held the belief that the murders were committed by the same person that this was not disclosed as it would have dramatically undermined the crown's case against Stagg".

Britton, said to be the inspiration behind the criminal profiler Fitz in the TV crime drama *Cracker*, has sought to absolve himself of any blame for the treatment of Stagg ever since he was heavily criticised by Mr Justice Ognall, who threw out the prosecution case. In a subsequent interview with the *Independent on Sunday*, after Napper became the chief suspect, Britton claimed that if police had acted on his earlier advice over a string of rapes in London, known as the Green Chain rapes (for which Napper is also apparently now the prime suspect), then "Samantha Bisset would never have been killed... and if it is the same person, then neither would Rachel Nickell".

It is incredible that, given the complete dearth of evidence linking Stagg to the Nickell murder, that he only faced trial because he was said to match a controversial deviant psychological profile of Rachel Nickel's killer, drawn up by "Crackers" Britton himself.

Eye readers may recall that under the strain of extensive police interrogation Stagg eventually confessed to... sunbathing naked on Wimbledon Common. He was charged with indecency and hauled before magistrates and could then be labelled a "convicted sex offender".

The reality was that Stagg had a spotless record.

LIBEL TOURISM SPECIAL

English law is Carter-Rucked

EVEN in the bleak midwinter of austerity Britain, one part of the tourism industry flourishes. Thanks to the efforts of Mr Justice Eady (right), foreign litigants still find London an irresistible destination.

"Although it is fashionable to rail against 'libel tourism'," he declared just before Christmas, "there is no reason in law why the courts of England and Wales should decline jurisdiction." Not even when – as in the case on which he was pronouncing – a Greek citizen living in Greece is suing an American newspaper and a Paris-based website.

Which is good news for the claimant, Alexis Mardas, better known as "Magic Alex", a former associate of the Beatles. Mardas is suing the *New York Times* over an article last February about the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, whom he visited with the Fab Four in 1968. He is also suing the *International Herald Tribune*, which didn't print the article but posted it on a website.

As Virgil nearly wrote: beware of Greeks bearing writs. But is London a suitable jurisdiction? Although the figures are in dispute, a high court master found that there were 27 hits from the UK on the *IHT* website and four on the *NYT* website. (And of course some of these may have been from Scotland or Northern Ireland, which aren't in the jurisdiction.) About 170 hard copies of the *Times* also reached the country, though it's not known if any of the buyers read the piece. The master decided last year that there wasn't sufficient publication in England and Wales to justify the time and expense of a trial. Eady has now overruled him.

Three years ago, the publisher of the *Wall Street Journal* succeeded in having a London libel action struck out as an abuse of process, since the offending online article had had only five hits – three of them from the claimant's lawyers. But Eady says that whether or not a libel action goes ahead "cannot depend upon a numbers game, with the court fixing an arbitrary minimum". He also denies that this case "can be characterised as a case of forum shopping", even though Mardas isn't suing in either of the more obvious forums, the US or France, where there was wider circulation. According to Eady, "that is beside the point". So a New York newspaper and Paris website must now prepare for a full London trial of an action brought by a Greek litigant.

On the very day of the ruling in the *New York Times* case, by happy coincidence, Denis MacShane MP initiated a parliamentary debate on the libel laws – and referred to Eady's imminent decision. "I do not know what the result will be, but why on earth is a British judge deciding on, or even hearing, a case against one of the world's great papers, simply because the plaintiff does not have the courage to take his case to, or knows that it would not stand up in, a New York court?"

It's just as well Eady was busy in the high court at the time: he wouldn't have enjoyed the debate one little bit. "It is unbelievable," MacShane thundered, "that the state legislatures of New York and Illinois, and Congress itself, are having to pass bills to stop British courts seeking to fine and punish American journalists and writers for publishing books and articles that may be freely read in the United States but which a British judge has decided are offensive to wealthy foreigners who can hire lawyers in Britain to persuade a British court to become a new Soviet-style organ of censorship against freedom of expression."

MPs from all parties seconded his denunciation of the English legal profession for silencing foreign authors and journalists. They were particularly concerned by Eady's decision to order the destruction of the American author Rachel Ehrenfeld's book on terrorism at the behest of a Saudi banker, and by the ability of convicted fraudster Nadhmi Auchi to scrub the web of critical reports (*Eyes passim*).

'It would be helpful if the Law Society investigated the behaviour of firms such as Schilling & Lom and Carter-Ruck'

– Rt Hon. Denis MacShane MP

Justice minister Bridget Prentice sympathised and said the government was considering limiting the obscene fees charged by libel lawyers. A barrister can make ten times as much defending a Saudi or Russian billionaire in the libel courts as a common or garden Brit in the criminal courts.

Tory MP Michael Gove observed that people "alleged to have links to extremism have used British courts to close down the investigation or publication of allegations that are in the public interest". Norman Lamb for the Liberal Democrats referred to allegations in the *Eye* that Auchi and "his lawyers, Carter-Ruck, have been making strenuous efforts to close down public debate".

Both went to the heart of the great issues of freedom of speech and national security. But none of the watching hacks noticed that what stirred the passions of the reformers' largely right-wing opponents was MacShane's attack on the legal profession for its role in impeding coverage of the global economic collapse. "The surreal nature of libel tourism can be found in the case of the Danish paper, *Ekstra Bladet*, which found itself being sued by the Iceland-based bank, Kaupthing, after it criticised it," he said.

After bringing the action in London, Kaupthing of course went bust, endangering the security of thousands of British savers, and threatening to return Iceland to a rural economy in the process. But while it could still afford to hire lawyers, it found English solicitors more than willing to help it silence awkward questions from a Danish paper which is all but unread in the UK.

"One would have thought that exposure of the bank's practices would have been in the widest public interest, but no. The British libel firm, Schilling & Lom — it certainly made plenty of shillings out of this case – which seems to specialise in touting for business, along with the infamous Carter-Ruck, acted for Kaupthing in London on the grounds that the articles critical of Kaupthing were available on the web.

"Again, one might have hoped that a British judge would have simply thrown out the case; but of course libel law is a very lucrative business for those small numbers of solicitors and barristers who practise it… It would be helpful if the Law Society investigated the behaviour of firms such as Schilling and Lom and Carter-Ruck, because actively touting for business is a serious problem."

As for the judiciary, MacShane named no names but said that "consideration needs to be given to the role of one particular judge. He is an honourable man, but it cannot be right that one area of law is principally in the hands of a single judge." (*He meant Eady – Ed.*)

Edward Garnier, a Tory MP, barrister and member of the defamation bar, bristled at the implied criticism of Eady. The judge "is a friend of mine", he confessed. "We used to share a room in chambers and [he is] an extremely bright, careful and sensitive man."

Andrew Pelling, the MP for Croydon Central, was as agitated by MacShane's criticism of Carter-Ruck. "I should like to make some declarations of interest," he announced. "I am a client of the excellent Carter-Ruck and I am currently taking recourse to the libel courts regarding issues relating to the media."

Pelling had the Tory whip withdrawn when the Met arrested and then released him without charge after his pregnant wife complained that he had assaulted her. He has had a hard time of it with the press ever since. But he was adamant that Carter Ruck and Schillings did not only protect the likes of him or the Saudi bankers, Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs and rapacious Icelanders who use their services. Not a bit of it. The proposal to restrict the ability of libel lawyers to play the no-win-no-fee game "strikes me as being yet another blow against the lower middle class and their ability to access the courts".

So there you have it. In the name of standing up for the little people, we must continue to allow English lawyers and judges to silence the critics of the world's richest men. ***Ratbiter***

SATANIC PANIC PT II

A Lawyer with a cult following

MORE on the Satanic undertones to the forthcoming trial in Italy of two people accused of murdering Leeds University student Meredith Kercher in Perugia in 2007.

As *Eye* 1225 reported, Giuliano Mignini, the public prosecutor in the case, has a history of believing in Satanic cult conspiracies. He has been criticised by an Italian judge for this "delirium" while investigating the notorious Monster of Florence murders in which seven courting couples were killed in the 70s and 80s. He is officially under investigation in a related case accused of obstruction of justice and abuse of office.

Despite this, Mignini is still in charge of the Kercher murder case against Amanda Knox, 21, and Knox's former boyfriend Raffaele Sollecito, both of whom deny the charge.

Their alleged accomplice, Rudy Guede, 21, has already been found guilty and jailed for 30 years. Guede admitted being in the bedroom where Ms Kercher was found on 1 November 2007, but denied being involved in her killing. His lawyer, Walter Biscotti, said he would appeal.

After a pre-trial hearing behind closed doors for Knox and Sollecito, defence lawyers told reporters that the prosecution had claimed that Ms Kercher's murder was part of a Satanic ritual. The prosecutor "alleged it was some kind of Satanic rite, with Amanda allegedly first touching Meredith with the point of a knife, then slitting her throat, while Sollecito held her by the shoulders, from behind, Guede held her by an arm" and tried to sexually penetrate her, Sollecito's lawyer Luca Maori told the Associated Press. Mignini declined to elaborate on his allegations, AP reported.

According to Guede's attorney, while Mignini did not use the term "Satanic ritual" in court, he alluded to it by noting that the killing included drug use and cultural connotations to Halloween, a pagan festival. "He framed it in a way that suggested there was a sect element to it," Biscotti later told the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

The case against prosecutor Mignini in Florence, where he could still face trial, partly involves his dealings with two journalists who investigated his handling of the Monster of Florence inquiry while they were researching a book, of the same name, which was published in June last year. Mignini is alleged to have tapped their phone, bugged one of their cars and obstructed justice in favour of a colleague. According to the book, Mignini conducted the investigation believing the killings were the work of a Satanic sect that needed female body parts as offerings to the devil in Black Masses. The case remains unsolved.

DEFENCE

Terrier trouble

BRITISH soldiers have been running make-believe operations with a new armoured vehicle on Salisbury Plain after it was supposed to be delivered to the battlefields of Afghanistan, because BAE Systems cannot make the vehicle work properly.

The Terrier (pictured) is a military engineering vehicle: an armoured machine on tracks with a bulldozer-like bucket on the front, a digger arm with a bucket on the side and a tow hook on the back. It is "designed to be a highly mobile, robust and reliable armoured earthmoving vehicle, which will support mobility, counter mobility and survivability throughout the spectrum of conflict".

However, because the vehicles built by BAE are anything but robust and reliable, troops have been involved in "simulated digging" in Britain instead of real digging in Afghanistan.

The National Audit Office (NAO) identified the Terrier problem in its recent report on military "major projects", revealing that it should have entered service last year but is not now expected to be ready until 2011. The NAO did not spell out the failure in full, merely reporting that "late delivery of demonstrator vehicles combined with failure of prototype to reach reliability target requires a longer reliability growth period in demonstration".

What this civil service speak means in English is that all the Terriers' digger buckets cracked when used and the towing attachment disconnected when going downhill – a fault discovered when a 20-ton trailer came off on Salisbury Plain. As one of the Terrier's duties is towing mine clearance machinery, this is a significant failure.

In effect the Terrier prototype could neither dig nor tow, the two reasons for its existence. So soldiers engaged in the testing were asked to carry out imaginary trench work or "simulated digging". But even these operations were limited when the Terrier's throttle began sticking because of grit – something an earthmoving vehicle might expect to encounter. Test crews were also limited to two hours' driving due to vibrations.

BAE's failures on the £300m project emerge at the same time as its problems with the firing mechanism on the chain gun on the Warrior armoured vehicle (see last *Eye*). The army has had to fill the Terrier gap by buying off-the-shelf JCBs and adding armour plating and camo paint.

IT COCK-UPS

An e-conveyancing truth

MORE millions have been quietly poured down the plughole marked "government IT cock-ups", as the Land Registry admits it has written off £15m of the £42m spent up to last March on its botched "e-conveyancing" project.

The scheme was launched in 2002 by the then lord chancellor Lord Irvine and should have seen paperless conveyancing become the norm two years ago. Now the full shambles of the trial project has been revealed.

Under the "chain matrix" system, property sale chains should have been logged and tracked electronically enabling lawyers, estate agents, buyers and sellers to check on progress. But the system was so hopeless only 10 such chains were successfully recorded, the longest covering just two transactions. The idea has been abandoned with a promise to look at it again in a couple of years.

As recently as nine months ago the Land Registry was still clinging to e-conveyancing, declaring that by 2015 it would "be the established method for transferring and mortgaging property". Yeah, right. Last month it was announced that, following the chain matrix disaster, it's back to the drawing board. The Land Registry is now doing the market research that should have been done years ago to gauge "the current and likely future market behaviours and preferences".

Doubtless enough will emerge to keep the multi-million pound contract with IT supplier IBM rolling along – even though a week after the announcement IBM was exposed by the public accounts committee as having supplied the IT contract for the Department for Transport which, instead of saving £57m, will end up costing taxpayers £81m.

● MEANWHILE with the ID card scheme already well delayed and ridiculed for not having the equipment to scan the cards of foreign students, Identity and Passport Service commercial director Bill Crothers has defended his brilliant handiwork in print in *Whitehall and Westminster World*.

"No one, anywhere, has ever built a database this big before," declares the man from Accenture – one of the firms that walked away from the massive NHS database deal because it was too problematic.

Crothers lists his national identity scheme (NIS) achievements so far. Top of the list? "Completed a framework procurement, linking five of the largest industry suppliers to the NIS." What he doesn't say is that the five companies – CSC, EDS, IBM, Fujitsu and Thales – were the only ones left after others, including Accenture, dropped out, so there was no competition.

ST HELENA AIRPORT

Expect delays

THE announcement that there is to be a "pause" in plans for an airport on the remote south Atlantic island of St Helena is trying the patience of the Saints – as the islanders call themselves.

International development secretary Douglas Alexander told parliament that "in light of the changed economic climate" there would be a pause in negotiations to allow discussion on value for money options for access to the island.

The island (population 3,900) is currently reached by infrequent mail boat from Cape Town, but the RMS St Helena is due to reach the end of its working life next year. It was hoped that the airport would bring in tourism and replace the £16m-a-year subsidy the island currently gets from the Department for International Development (DfID) to supplement money earned through coffee, honey and fishing. If successful, the £100m airport would pay for itself.

Of course the airport plans wouldn't be affected by the downturn if the project hadn't been so dogged by delay. In 2006, after years of feasibility studies and modelling by consultants Atkins, all three bidders pulled out complaining about the lack of detailed site information and saying the project was too high risk (*Eye* 1167). A new shortlist of two bidders wasn't ready until January 2008 and Italian firm Impregilo SpA was only selected as preferred bidder in October. With the contract apparently imminent, Impreglio staff visited in November to assess the local workforce and facilities.

Islanders fear the current pause could result in the scheme going tits up yet again. To lose one set of bidders was unfortunate; to botch it now would look like carelessness.

JOHN BOURN'S JUNKETS

More Ritz crackers

ALTHOUGH the *Eye* established enough of former National Audit Office boss Sir John Bourn's junketing for him to resign a year ago, the NAO consistently refused to divulge the names of the 160 "UK contacts" he took out to lunch and dinner at taxpayers' expense in just three years. Until now, that is: the Information Commissioner has decided that their disclosure is in the public interest.

Most lavish hospitality was reserved for the captains of industry who routinely hosted Bourn and his wife at social and sporting events (see *The Bourn Complicity, Eye* 1218). Thus in October 2006 the taxpayer was forking out £301 for a dinner for Bourn and BAE Systems chief executive Mike Turner at the Ritz while his firm faced a string of bribery allegations. (Former BAE chairman Sir Dick Evans went one better, enjoying a lunch *and* dinner at the Ritz).

Bill Thomas, the UK boss of the government's largest IT supplier, EDS, was also a popular guest as his firm escaped NAO investigation for a decade despite a string of cock-ups. Bourn treated him, on the NAO credit card, to two dinners at the Ritz, a dinner at the Savoy and lunch at Wiltons for a total cost of £894. Tasty.

Other captains of industry providing dubious public services to be schmoozed included Crapita chairman Rod Aldridge (lunch at the Ritz and dinner at the Goring, total £415) and any number of defence company directors with delayed, over-budget public contracts behind them.

The Bourn expense account also enticed senior public officials with reason to hope the NAO would look kindly on them. Ministry of Defence permanent secretary Bill Jeffrey could discuss the trickier aspects of the billions his department was wasting over a £148 lunch at Wiltons. And in a scene straight out of *Yes, Minister*, the Sir Humphrey figure of cabinet secretary Sir Gus O'Donnell and the country's spending watchdog could also be found lunching at Wiltons for £168 – perhaps discussing the job-slashing efficiency programme O'Donnell was pushing through at the time.

Another sworn enemy of waste tucking in on the taxpayer included Scottish Auditor General Bob Black. When he visited London in April 2006 his subsistence consisted of dinner at Rules followed by lunch at The Goring, total cost 272. Great British scoff for Great British auditors! Similarly lacking in a taste for irony if not fine dining, Sir Peter Gershon enjoyed lunch at the Savoy just before Christmas 2004 (£177) – soon after completing his eponymous efficiency review for Gordon Brown.

One of the reasons Bourn's excesses went undetected for so long was that the NAO's auditor Robson Rhodes signed accounts incorrectly omitting his perks. RR partner Eugene Sullivan enjoyed a £136 lunch with Bourn in January 2005.

At least these troughers – or "key external stakeholders" in the words of the NAO – had interests in the NAO, on the strength of which the watchdog argued they shouldn't be named in order to "maintain an open and honest dialogue". For others the connection is harder to see. Why, for example, would retired head teacher and City of London council member Joyce Nash need to be taken out to lunch *six* times (to Brown's, Aurora, The Savoy, and 1 Aldwych) at a cost of £1,030? Or Welsh Assembly member Janet Davies to dinner at the Aurora and Bibendum (£328) in the space of a month, *after* Bourn had lost responsibility for Welsh audits? To these and many other questions the NAO was unable to supply answers.

The full list of Bourn's lunch and dinner guests will be at www.private-eye.co.uk from 9 January.

In the City

FINANCIAL history looks set to start repeating itself as the seeds of the next great investment scandal are laid with high street banks slashing interest rates to savers below 1 percent and the best available market rates, mostly from banks or building societies with dented reputations or small mutuals, looking likely to head towards 3 percent if base rate is, as expected, cut once again this month.

Chasing returns was perhaps the biggest factor in creating the climate that spawned the current global financial crisis, with its origins in derivatives based on US sub-prime mortgages. It was the need to boost income at a time of low interest rates that persuaded banks and investors such as local authorities as far apart as small-town America, Arctic Circle Norway and rural Australia to buy into the financially engineered derivative products which have blown a hole in their finances. The key attraction – apart from the investment bankers' sales spin of no risk – was that such wondrous creations of mass destruction as collateralised debt obligations, synthetic CDOs and credit default swaps always offered a much higher return than plain vanilla bonds.

"I just rang to check if you'd got my letter about the email I sent you?"

Chasing returns powered the Icelandic banking bust for millions of British savers plus charities and local authorities tempted into Icesave, Heritable and Kaupthing by the chart-topping interest rates they offered.

Chasing returns was what made life easy for Bernard Madoff and his $50bn Ponzi scheme, which so beguiled the rich with its offers of a steady 1 percent a month not available to hoi polloi. High returns have always been in the con artists' toolbox – remember standby letters of credit or prime bank guarantees, both versions of the circular money Ponzi fraud.

The need to boost income for the likes of pensioners on fixed incomes, councils, charities and pension funds facing increased costs will be high on the agenda in 2009. Which means that already those same banks and brokers who drummed up business for the toxic rubbish that has cost so many so much will once again be looking to produce products that will offer that little bit more. Of course they will be different from the last ones – except in one respect they will not be and never are. Higher returns always mean higher risks, no matter what the salesmen or their backroom brains trust's computer models say.

This time, perhaps financial regulators will be proactive in policing the products marketed by those they are supposed to regulate, rather than just allowing the *caveat emptor* rule to apply – a policy that could also be better followed by those who accept advertisements offering alternatives to low or no returns.

Gordon Brown and Alistair Darling promise that other antidotes to a repeat of the great crash of 2008 will be on the agenda in 2009. It will start with a reform of the "light touch" regulatory system, which Brown so proudly created, and which contributed so much to the failures at Northern Rock and Bradford & Bingley and to City excess in general, and which has required the taxpayer to step in where beforehand they had been declared to be unwanted and unnecessary.

The answer lies not in creating more rules, but in enforcing the existing ones. The former Securities & Exchange Commission chairman Arthur Levitt, referring to the SEC's failings from Enron onwards, commented: "It seems to me the enforcement effort in recent years has fallen short of what one Supreme Court justice once called the 'fear of the shotgun behind the door'. With this commission, the shotgun too rarely came out from behind the door."

The same can be said of the Fundamentally Supine Authority – as seen in its failure to prevent or restrain Northern Rock's 125 percent mortgages or 75 percent reliance on money markets; sub-prime lending or investment bank bonuses.

One of the reasons for that cowardice in the face of challenge has been the extent of regulatory capture both on Wall Street and in the City, encouraged by the wish of the regulators' political masters to do nothing to interrupt or upset but instead to celebrate the "filthy rich" (Peter Mandelson) or "more millionaires" (John Hutton). The recent explanation of former Clinton treasury secretary Robert Rubin for the failure to bring in regulation of derivatives trading is: "All the forces of the system were arrayed against it. The industry certainly did not want any increase in these requirements." Rubin went on to help guide Citigroup on to the rocks.

When the then New York attorney general Eliot Spitzer suggested that changes were needed on Wall Street, he was told by one regulator that "the industry would not like it". Spitzer's puzzled reply: "But you're the regulator."

In Britain, the FSA and other regulators have been increasingly bullied and cowed by threats from those they are supposed to regulate. Threats of judicial review or litigation from ranks of highly paid lawyers in the big, white-shoe law firms have had a chilling effect. The regulatory practices at all the big law firms have boomed since Chancellor Brown created the FSA with the intention of making the City and financial services the economy's golden goose. The aim of such lawyers and bank compliance departments, often aided by former regulators hired at twice or three times their salaries, is not to assist regulation but to make it work for them and prevent or at least mitigate it. The firepower applied against regulators has been proved to work over and over again in either dropped or watered-down criticisms or fines.

Consider the knee-jerk reaction of the big four accountancy firms to any disciplinary action. No matter how big the black hole – BCCI, Maxwell, Equitable Life – there is never any admission of failure. Instead millions are spent fending off the regulator – a policy that ensures that the inevitable criticism and fines are delayed for years until the guilty partners are either dead or retired.

If the firms do not like the regulator's verdict or opinion, they simply refuse to accept it. As PricewaterhouseCoopers did last month when criticised by the Financial Reporting Council for cross-selling consultancy services to audit clients – discouraged since Enron and WorldCom exposed the conflict-of-interest risks of adding up the company numbers differently from those required by the directors who paid for the consultancy. PwC "disagreed" with the FRC and insisted on its reputation for independence and integrity.

The intimidation often felt by regulators when confronted by a big-name bank and its high-powered legal representatives explains much of the recent regulatory failures. It is much easier to do nothing than to do something that rattles the cage and ends in career tears.

Reputations also often encourage regulators to disbelieve what they are told. Madoff was clearly a beneficiary of that convenient excuse for inaction – how could the former chairman of Nasdaq be a conman? How could those running Northern Wreck and B&B not know what they are doing, and how can some lowly paid regulator know more about the bank's business model than those who built it?

Then there is the cosy relationship between regulator and regulated, as exposed by current FSA chief executive Hector Sants' entertaining of hedge fund and private equity managers at Mosimann's private dining club. Sants' FSA expenses also reveal that when head of wholesale markets he had entertained unidentified execs from Lehman Brothers (RIP) Credit Suisse First Boston and UBS to breakfast and lunch in 2004, CSFB again in February 2005, Lehmans and UBS again but for lunch in September 2005, and another breakfast with Lehmans in May 2006.

A Freedom of Information request has revealed that last year Sants was entertained to lunch in February by New Star Asset Management (now fading from the scene after too much borrowing and not enough performance) and to dinner by HBOS (now being rescued by the taxpayer and Lloyds TSB). In May former FSA chairman Sir Callum McCarthy was lunched by Goldman Sachs and in September he was given dinner by Citibank. In January 2008 Sally Dewar, the newly appointed FSA managing director for wholesale markets, was given lunch by Merrill Lynch (rescued by Bank of America nine months later). In April she was the guest of the doomed Lehmans, in June by soon-to-fail Icelandic bank Kaupthing and in September by Goldmans. Dan Waters, head of retail policy and former enforcement chief, was taken to Glyndebourne and to another concert plus dinner in 2004 by Schroder Investment Management, and invited to the Chelsea Flower Show plus a meal for two by JP Morgan in 2007.

The FSA and its creator Gordon Brown insist there will be a brand-new world of regulation after the failures of the past, but already there are the siren sounds of those who are paid to insist that regulation means red tape and the golden geese will fly off to warmer and more accommodating climes in Dubai, Mumbai or Singapore. So it remains to be seen whether there will be a new sheriff in town or just the old, toothless version in new clothes.

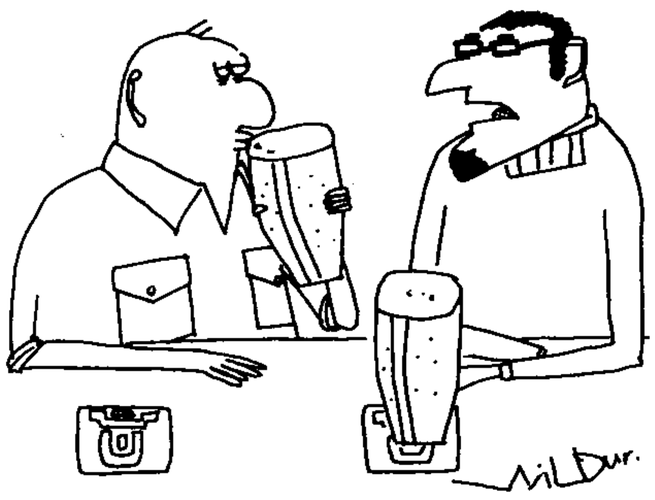
While waiting to see what Brown will conjure up, investors will be much better protected if the shareholders of banks and major companies are encouraged/pressured into acting more like owners and less like dummies when confronted by greedy and risk-addicted managers. The bonus culture, which is suddenly seen as responsible for so much of the damage done, could have been halted long ago if institutional shareholders had used their power to vote down management incentive schemes and to pressure non-executives on remuneration committees just to say no instead of being schmoozed into acquiescence or accepting being ignored.

Regulatory capture also occurred in City boardrooms where the non-execs, there to control or restrain management, became classic examples of the Stockholm Syndrome, adopting their executive captors' every whim and need, as at Royal Bank of Scotland and HBOS as well as Northern Wreck and B&B, not to mention the investment banks. Just how much say the taxpayer has at RBS and Lloyds TSB/HBOS will be another indicator of change – will there be any government-nominated directors, and will their brief be to say no?

The row over housebuilder Bellway's proposed bonus bonanza would be a good place for the institutions to start. Instead of bewailing this unwarranted largesse by the directors to themselves, institutional shareholders should vote against the directors at next week's annual meeting. More action and less talk by those who own the business would do a lot to prevent boardroom greed, which has thrived on the transfer of power from the owners to those they employ. Now that would be a form of self-regulation that might work.

UNSURPRISINGLY, and as suggested a year ago, 2008 was indeed a very good year for candidates in the annual awards from the Gnome Institute for Greed Management. There were so many worthy of recognition. However, the winners were:

Crook of the Year (and of the decade so far) – **Bernie Madoff**. Who else could compete with ripping off so many rich and sophisticated



"My website? Oh, it was a bit of a one hit wonder"

investors who could and should have known better if their (and their advisers/fund managers') greedy glands had not been so excited?

Suit of the Year – Dick Fuld of Lehman Brothers, for presiding over the demise of a Wall Street giant by plucking bankruptcy from the jaws of potential rescue.

Newcomer of the Year – Jerome Kerviel of Société Générale, for trading his way to a rogue trader record $7bn loss without buying a single sub-prime mortgage.

Comeback of the Year – Guy Naggar, who featured at Keyser Ullmann before it crashed and who briefly revived another old City failure, Dawnay Day, into a £2bn illusion before it went pop.

The Golden Trough – There were so many who joined this queue, especially from the banks who created the whole financial mess, that it was hard to find a clear winner. Thus the award is shared, by **Sir "Fred the Shred" Goodwin**, who took a £2.86m bonus in February for driving RBS over the edge in 2007 and then had to be blasted out of the bank in October; and by Merrill Lynch's **John Thain**, who it seems might have needed persuading that it was the right thing not to have a $5-$10m bonus given the BoA rescue and the $700bn Wall Street bail-out by the taxpayer – even if he had not been in charge when Merrill charged into the sub-prime business.

'Slicker'

OLD ANATOLE'S ALMANACK

"Each year, in my last Economic View before Christmas, I try to shed some light on economic events of the previous 12 months by comparing what has actually happened with expectations published here in early January. This year, even more than usual, reading back through January's predictions has been a shock. Almost all have turned out to be wrong." – Anatole Kaletsky, *Times*, 18 December 2006.

"My last article of every year looks back on the predictions I made in early January to shed some light on the economic and financial events of the previous 12 months. This tends to be a humbling experience, and this year it is even more so than usual." – **Anatole Kaletsky, *Times*, 31 December 2007.**

"In the last Economic View every year, I look back at what I predicted here in early January, to try to shed some light on the events of the previous 12 months. This is nearly always a humbling experience… This year, however, the routinely humbling experience has turned into a ritual humiliation. How else can I describe the public confession that I am now compelled to make: I hereby confess that on or about 14 January 2008, acting of my own free will, not under the influence of any drug and aware of the consequences of my actions, I wrote the following statements in the *Times*: 'The global credit crisis, far from taking a turn for the worse, is now almost over' and 'There will be no US recession' and 'Stock markets around the world will rise in 2008'… I must apologise to anyone misled by my analysis." – **Anatole Kaletsky, *Times*, 29 December 2008.**

EYE CROSSWORD 382

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 16 January 2009

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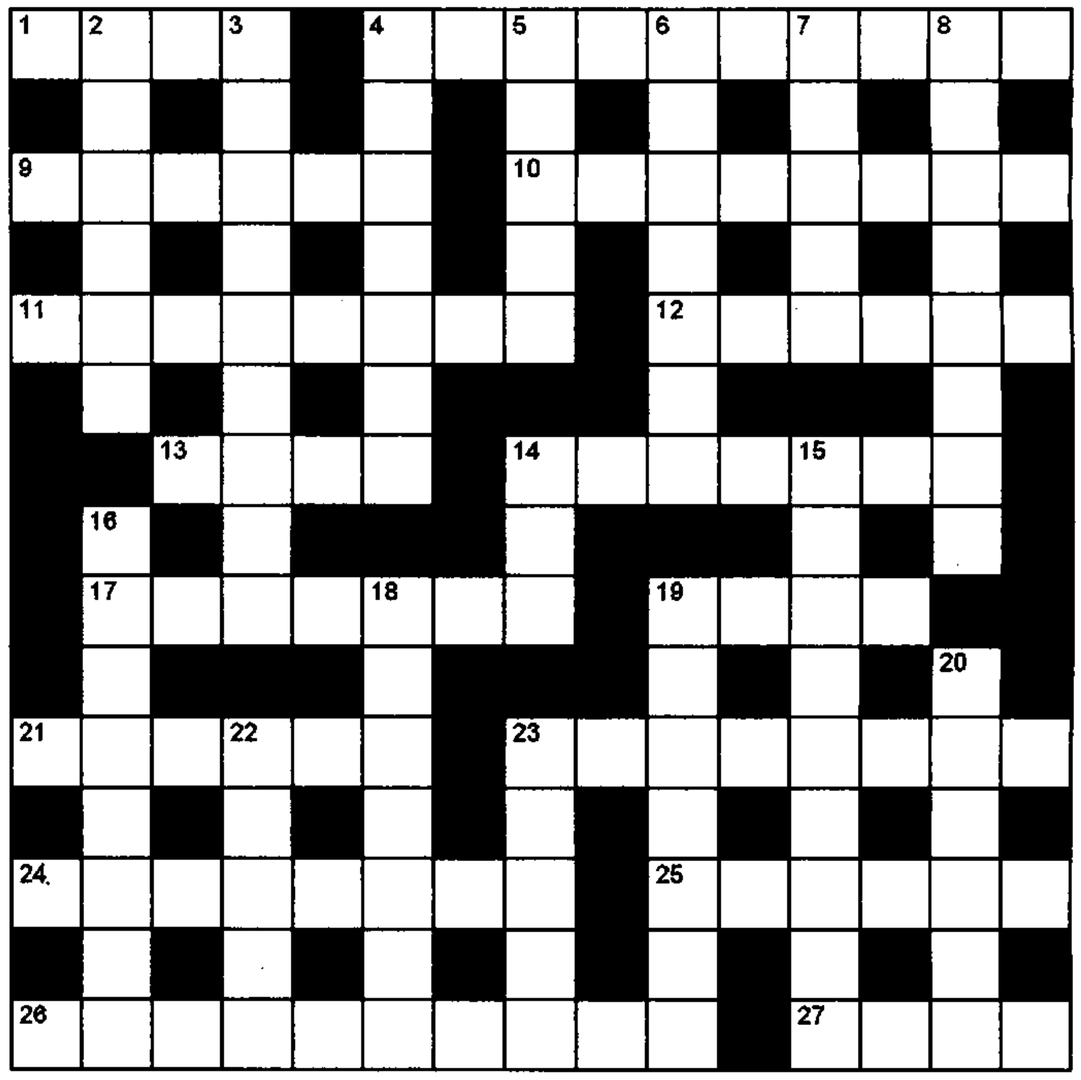


ACROSS

1 Bloody thick, this leader of council group (4)
4 Satisfy yourself mother's butter is runny without one (10)
9 Hot when woman's scarf nudges middle of penis (6)
10 What Brown seeks for his policies? Papal dispensation about love in recreational vehicle (8)
11 Snap a heavy breather's thing? Cheeky! (8)
12 Seamen flustered into forced evacuations (6)
13/14ac. They offer an advantageous purchase to overweight lovers (4,7)
17 One more pervert on earth (7)
19 See 5dn.
21/27 Substitute model of inflation that offers some relief? (4-2,4)
23 He complains of thing having ring attached by Rex (8)
24 Occasional topless co-ed pics I processed (8)
25 Erection not up to scratch after second time (6)
26 Paddy-driven social Lib-Lab pact's description? (5-5)
27 See 21ac.

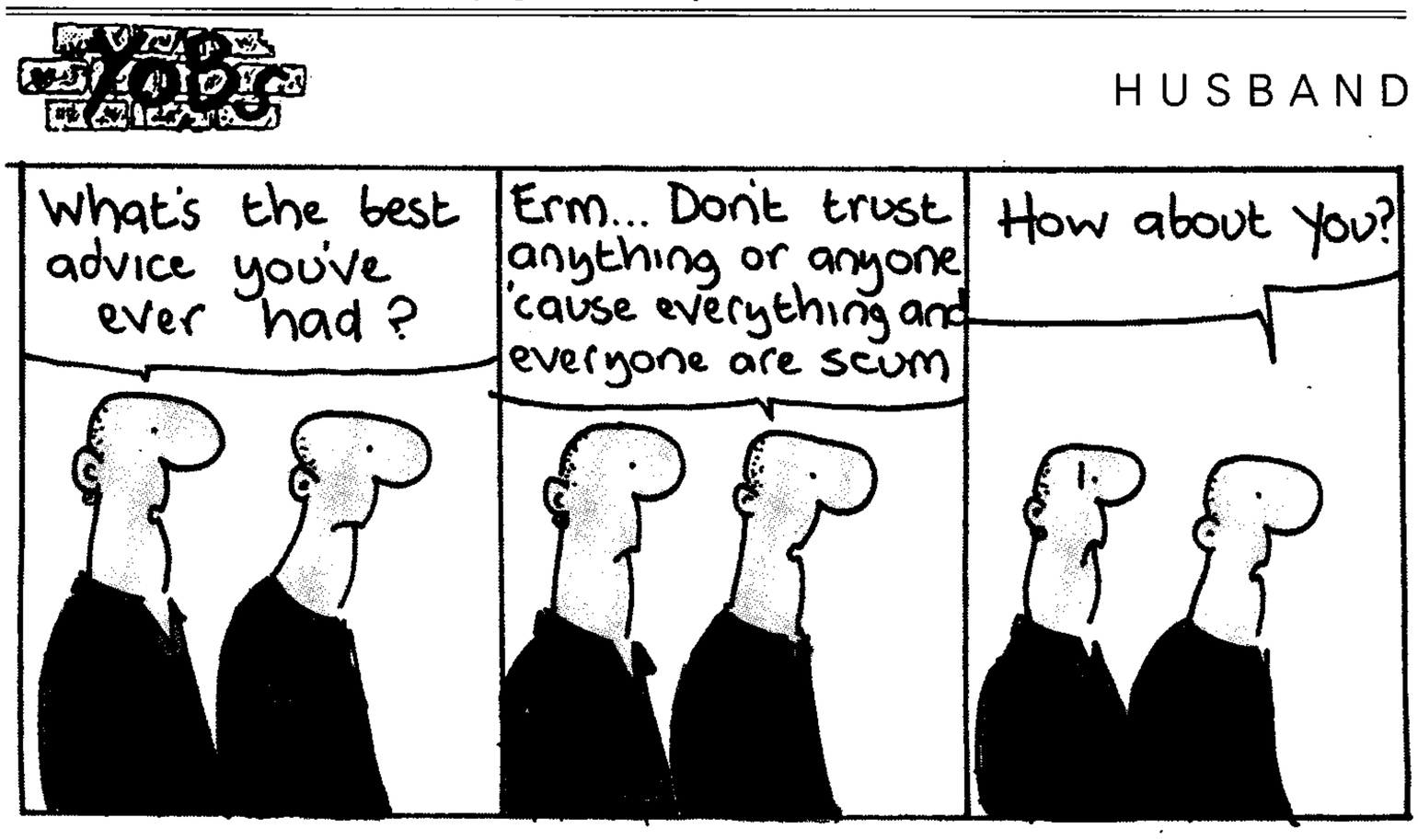
DOWN

2 Make a hit: say yes to opening of trousers (3,3)
3 Celebs who keep their distance may nevertheless be taken with this (9)
4 Electoral authority also welcomed by China (7)
5/19ac. John Sergeant's decision to quit *Strictly Come Dancing*? Certainly not any of his dance steps! (5,4)
6 Lots have sex (not head, though), a number taking stimulant (7)
7 Stink raised by body over Australian low grade plonk (5)
8 Drop behind a human dynamo (4-4)
14/19dn. Brenda gets "Queen Mother" joke by flunkey finally (3,7)
15 Bastard Conservative in terribly evil hold (4,5)
16 After drink, Brenda's a belter! (8)
18 Over-promoted, extremely hammy deputy given a rise and feeling good (5,2)
19 See 14ac.
20 Pained expression over fuel adjustment – "Pisspoor!" (6)
22 "We adore Sara Palin – simply tops!": the core element of her followers? (5)
23 Award that's a vehicle for gross people? (5)

Crossword 381 winner: JOANNA BURNETT

ACROSS: 13 Pretentiousness 14 Hanky-panky 15/28 Celine Dion 16 Chill 17 Expansive 18 Fawn 19 Private sector 20 Mufti 21 Ice Age 23 Streaky 27 Arthurian 30 Embalmer 31/54 Craig Raine 33 Sieve 34/74 Tracey Emin 36/77 Love nest 37 Funds 38 Melon 40 Satan 41 Lush 42 Stress 45 Exhort 47 Indigo 48 Rabble 51 GSOH 53 Macaw 55 Brief 57 Fave 58 Cannon 59 Rural 61/26 Tanya Gold 62 Take care 63 As if 65 Laughable 66 Bike 67 Brothel 69 Satnav 70 Tidal 71 Richard Madeley 76 Stockings 78 Splat 79/49 Lauren Laverne 80 Giles Coren 81 Standing ovation.

DOWN: 1 Upkeep 2 Semiliterate 3 Geneva 4 Sticker 5 Police forces 6 Isolated 7 Meteor 8 VSOP 9 Antivivisectionists 10 By design 11 Half-dead 12/43 Ekow Eshun 14 Hanif Kureishi 20 Mates 22 Grovels 24 Tim Lott 27 A A Gill 29 Printed circuit board 32 Admirer 34 Tenor 35 Ad lib 39 Nankeen 44 Semen 46 Howard Hodgkin 50 Big toe 52 Swansea 55 Blackballing 56 Fakir 57 Face the music 60 Libel 64 Finances 65 Lovesick 66 Backside 68 Edition 71 Rascal 72 Afloat 73 Eyeing 75/25 Mein Kampf.


YOBS
HUSBAND
What's the best advice you've ever had?
Erm... Don't trust anything or anyone 'cause everything and everyone are scum
How about you?

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A special appeal on behalf of homeless young people

key to sponsor a room

centre point give homeless young people a future

Will you sponsor a room at Centrepoint?

Your gift of £12 a month – just 40p a day – will help a homeless young person get off the streets for good

Centrepoint is the national charity dedicated to transforming the lives of homeless young people. Today, we are searching for caring individuals who can help us.

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A life on the streets can mean death on the streets

Over half the young people we see have slept rough. In some cases, it takes just hours for them to be approached by drug dealers and pimps. They don't choose this life. Instead, they find themselves homeless having fled sexual abuse, violence and family breakdown.

We believe that these young people deserve compassion and support. Yet they experience constant hardship, prejudice and abuse. Under these conditions, their health, self-respect and hopes for the future can be quickly destroyed.

Will you sponsor a Centrepoint room for a young person like Sophie?

Sophie eventually ended up on the streets after suffering abuse at home. *"I slept on window ledges and in doorways. One of my friends overdosed and another girl was raped and murdered."*

Thankfully, Sophie came to Centrepoint. She is now back in education and looking forward to the future. *"Without Centrepoint, I wouldn't be here. They've helped me be a normal person – someone who no longer has to beg for food or affection."*

£12 a month gives a vulnerable young person a safe room to stay in and vital support to rebuild their life

By sponsoring a Centrepoint room, you'll help offer successive residents a safe home and the support they need to go to college, find a job and stay off the streets for good.

HELP NOW
Call 0800 23 23 20

As a sponsor, you'll help offer intensive counselling to enable young men and women to come to terms with their experiences. And on a more basic level, you'll ensure they learn the kind of skills many of us take for granted, like how to budget, pay bills and cook.

Become a sponsor and see exactly how your gifts change a young person's life

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Will it be possible to meet the young person in the room I am sponsoring?
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Will I be the only sponsor of the room?
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Will the young person in my sponsored room have my name and address?
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Can I give more than £12 a month?
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caseworker is really worried
but there is nothing she
can do. i am scared too now.

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NO2ID
Stop the database state

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View of Tripoli (adapted), lithograph c. 1850

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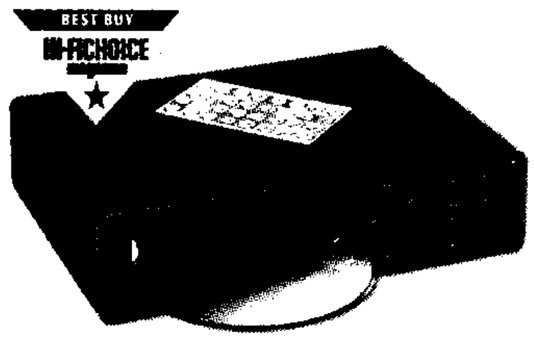

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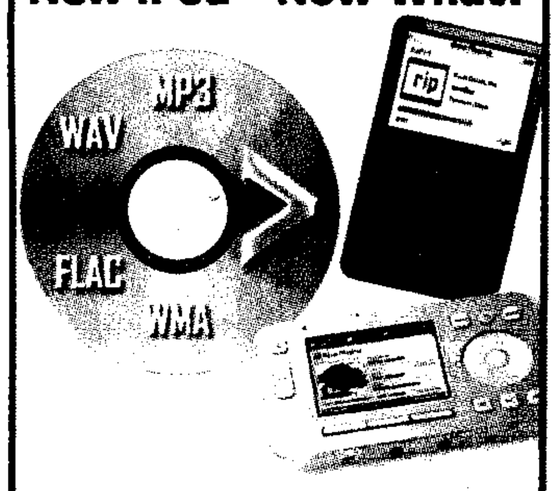

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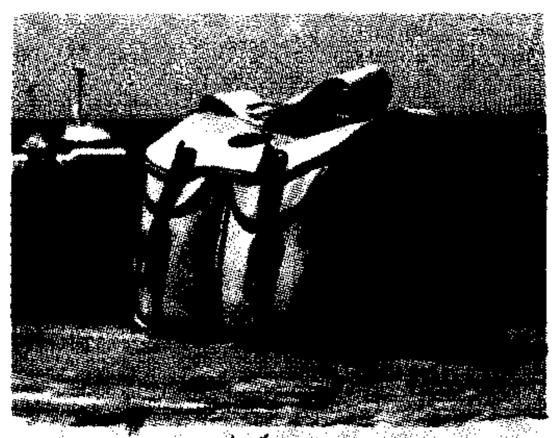

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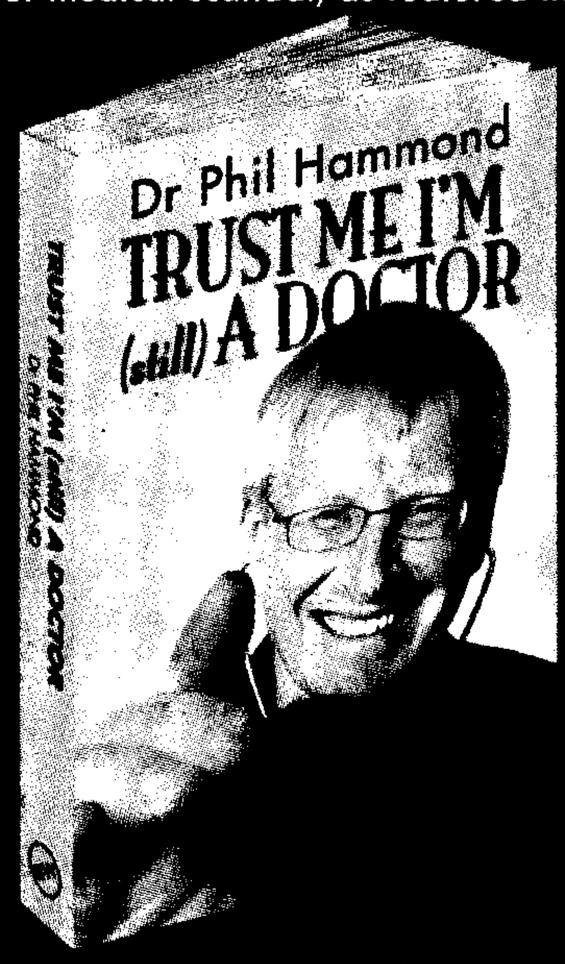

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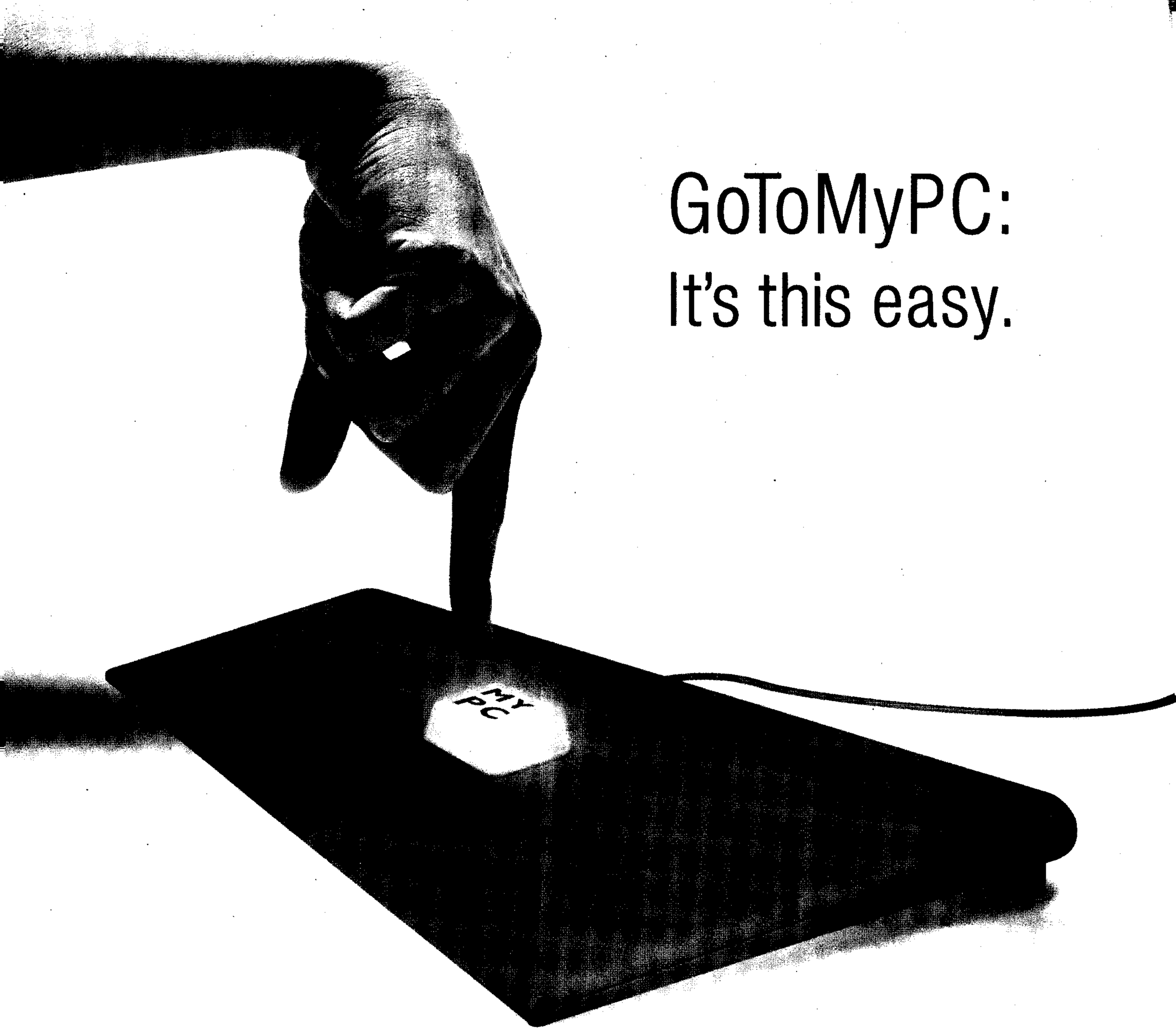

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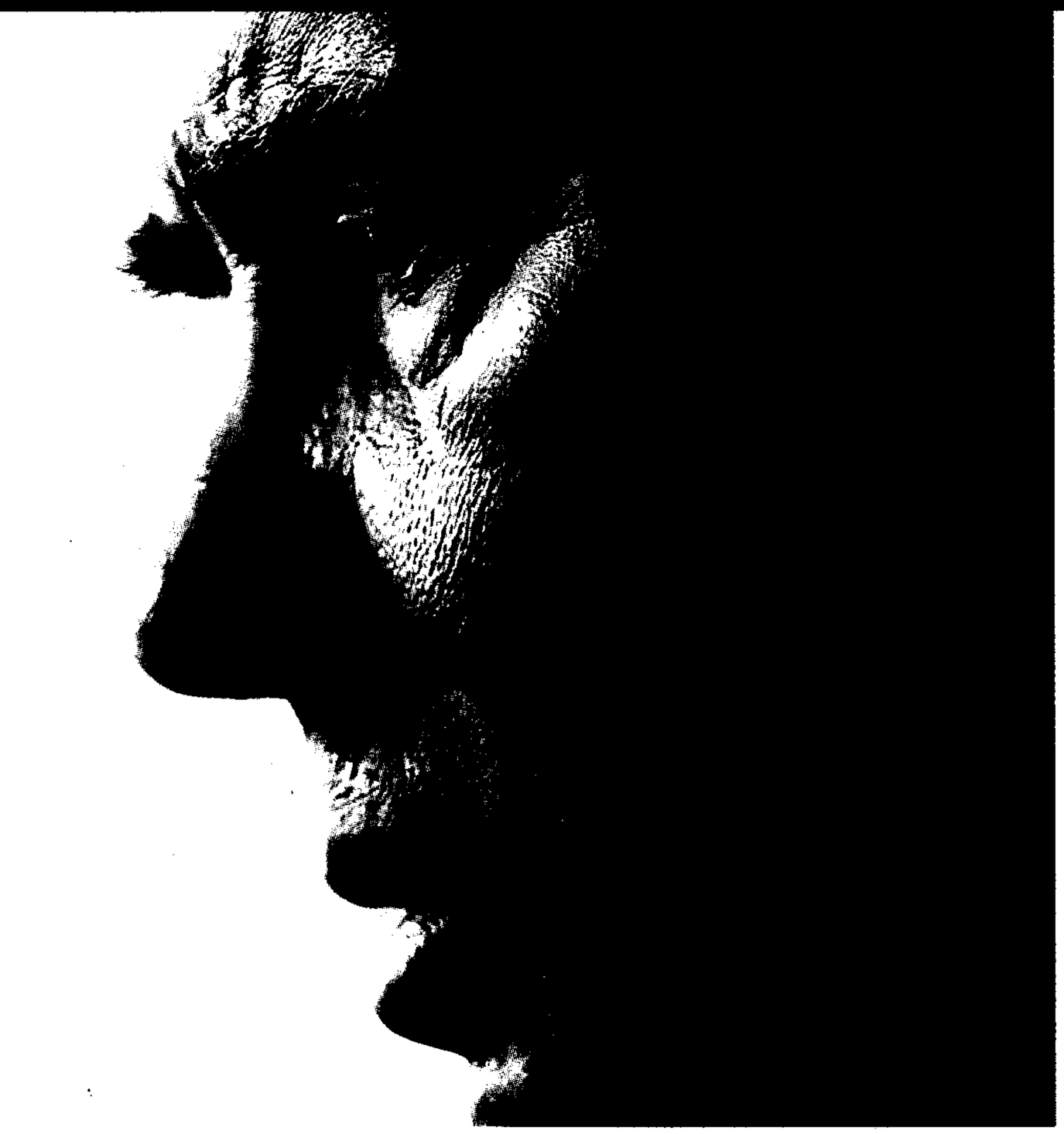

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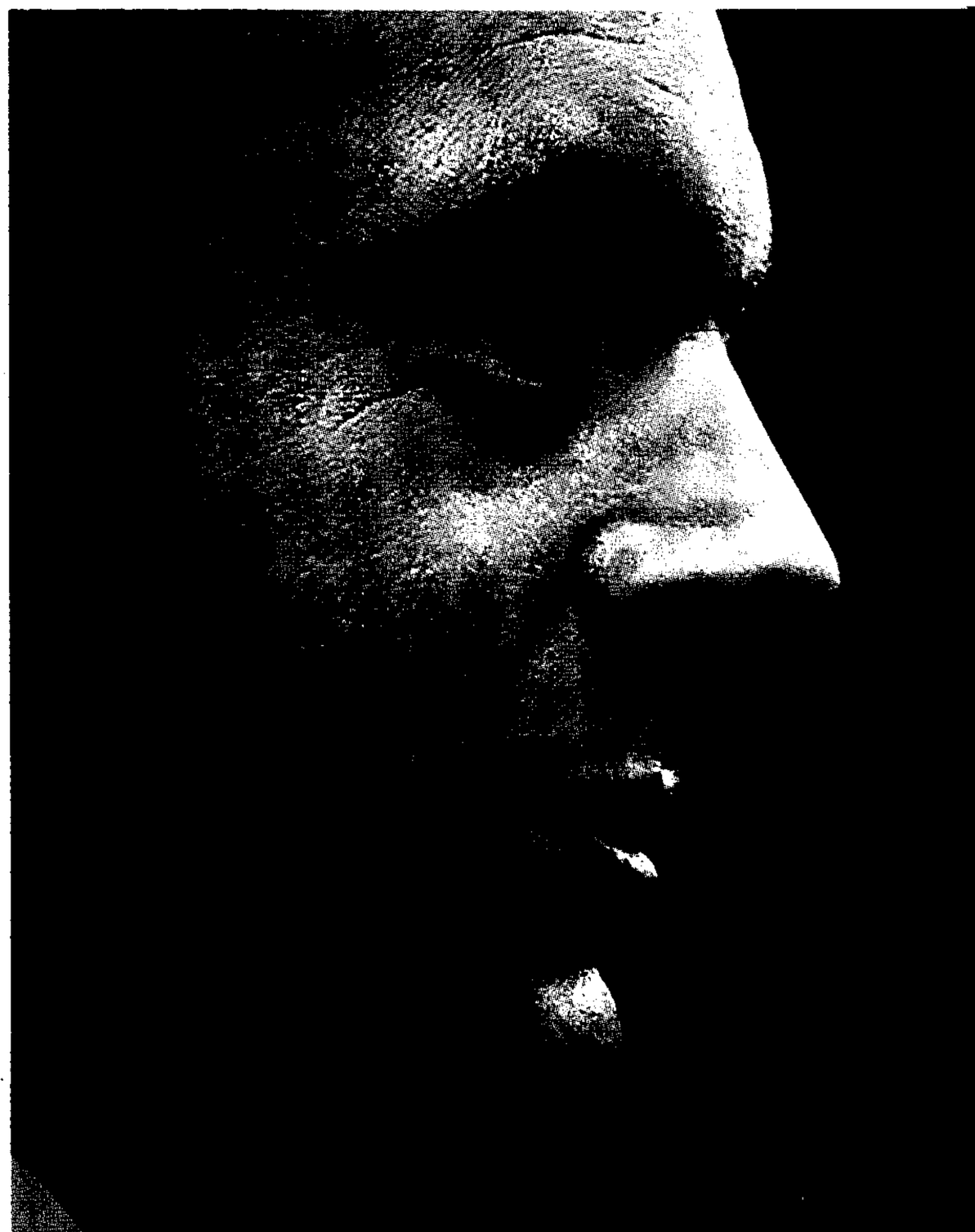

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